

The
ALBATROSS
◆ NOVELS ◆



THEIR
MARRIAGE BOND



ALBERT ROSS

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By ALBERT ROSS

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THEIR MARRIAGE BOND.

BY ALBERT ROSS.

AUTHOR OF

"HIS FOSTER SISTER," "SPEAKING OF ELLEN,"
"THOU SHALT NOT," "WHY I'M SINGLE,"
"HIS PRIVATE CHARACTER." ETC.



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TO MY READERS.

Since the date of the publication of my last novel, "His Foster Sister," the press of the country has been extensively victimized through a bogus statement which appeared originally in two of the New York newspapers and was telegraphed far and wide in all directions. Dispatches were sent by Boston correspondents to those sheets in February, alleging that I had become insane and was "confined in a madhouse." A denial, coupled with physicians' certificates, which I sent to the press, was printed in some cases, but the original story gained by far the larger circulation.

The flimsy basis of the injurious statement was the fact that I had suffered severely from insomnia, and had placed myself under the special care of an expert physician at his residence. Friends in many States sent sympathizing letters to my family, who were much disturbed and annoyed at the falsehoods. The publications, which included in one instance an imaginary portrait of myself in an insane state, with an article by an expert on the causes of my dementia, greatly aggravated my symptoms and has undoubtedly delayed my recovery. I am at present getting back to health very slowly, but I think surely, and owing to a habit of keeping my work

well ahead, I am able to give you my usual July novel in time.

You will notice that I have returned in the present instance to a discussion of those relations between men and women which make a very large share of the troubles of the world. I intend to emphasize the folly of compelling marriage between unwilling people, and also to show once more the inevitable suffering which is certain to follow infringements of the moral law. For, although my hero and heroine outlive their transgressions, the experiences through which they pass will not encourage any one to tread in their footsteps. I have also endeavored to give due compensation to the wronged ones, who suffered from no fault of their own.

Neither writers nor readers are likely to agree as to the kind of novel that is most interesting and instructive, but I see no reason to make any permanent change in my own methods. I have failed utterly to find entertainment in the new style of romance which deals with frequent broadsword combats and wearisome confinements of military gentlemen in pitch-dark dungeons. I am even impervious to the delights of tales wherein private persons are mistaken for sovereigns of foreign countries, on account of red hair brought into their families through the fault of their grandmothers. The everyday affairs of common life are enough for me, and the language of the present hour is more pleasing to my ear than the mixture of fifteenth century English and boulevard French which those impossible cavaliers present.

The handsome, complete edition in cloth binding, which my publishers have lately issued, will enable all who wish to do so to obtain my novels in that form. The constant demand for even the very earliest ones indicates that they have found a permanent place. I only

ask those critics who feel it necessary to attack my stories violently to read at least a portion of some volume before they sharpen their stiletos; and to those who have so often given me more praise than I deserve, I say, credit me with the intention and desire of entertaining and benefiting my readers, and I shall be content.

At this date I am convalescing, but unable to do much work. To those who have sent expressions of sympathy I return heartfelt thanks. It is much to know that so many whom I have never met were induced to send messages of condolence to my loved ones, when they supposed me beyond the reach of their words. When I am sufficiently recovered I shall be impelled to renewed efforts to please my million readers, who have been so steadfast and loyal to me.

ALBERT ROSS.

Cambridge, Mass., May, 1897.

THEIR MARRIAGE BOND.

CHAPTER I.

A CONTEMPLATED UNION.

The handsome, old-fashioned parlors of Mrs. Walden Bruce, at Newton, near Boston, were filled with a happy company. Mrs. Bruce had been a resident of the town for many years, and invitations to her "evenings" were held in high esteem by residents for many miles around. The people one was likely to meet there were seldom either snobs or lions, but were selected with the idea of making a cheerful group capable of imparting pleasure to each other and insuring occasions where the danger of being bored was reduced to a minimum.

Mrs. Bruce, though hardly yet out of the thirties, had been long a widow. At the moment when our story opens she was standing, with her handsome daughter, in the centre of an animated circle engaged in conversation. Though still so young, she had an abundance of silvery hair, which she had never taken any pains to conceal.

She was of matronly build, with a good color, a bright pair of dark eyes and a charming expression of countenance. In her dress she was tasteful, but simple. She was not a believer in the school which throws a young woman back into the frivolities of youth merely because she happens to be bereft of her husband. Neither did she think it seemly to parade her loss on all possible occasions, though she felt the blow keenly. She had steered, with great discernment, between the perpetual black crape and veil that make one shudder at a certain species of woman and the frivolous actions of another variety which becomes a sort of ballet dancer for the delectation of the rising generation. She was reputed possessed of a fair fortune, and the estate on which her residence was situated was a beautiful old place, comprising many acres, which seemed destined, with the growth of Boston, to be very valuable at some time in the future.

Miss Ida Bruce, the only daughter of the lady, then in her nineteenth year, was unquestionably the fairest object among the many good-looking women present. Plump without being stout, a little above the average in height, with a lovely complexion, and an abundance of fair hair arranged with exquisite taste, she was as pretty a girl as one might find in a long journey. She was gowned most becomingly, and her manners were a happy medium between the simpering ways of the grammar-school graduate and the airy pretensions that so many of her sex think it best to affect.

"Simply charming!" was the expression of all the men who saw her; and the same verdict was wrung unwillingly from the lips of many women whose envious eyes wandered over the beautiful picture.

"Oh, there's no denying that Ida Bruce is pretty!"

they would say, in despair. "And I wonder who taught her to dress with such perfection. I never saw her when she wasn't a model for a costumer, though I don't believe she spends any more on her clothes than hundreds who can't approach them in effect."

Two young men stood on opposite sides of the room from Mrs. Bruce and her daughter, eying them as closely as was consistent with good breeding, between the pauses in the conversation they were having.

"How wondrously beautiful Ida is to-night!" said one of them, whose name was Carroll Thorpe, as if the expression was forced from him in spite of himself.

Gordon Hayne, to whom the remark was addressed, did not take his gaze from the object of its apostrophe.

"She is, on the whole, the finest girl of her age I ever saw," he responded, in a low tone.

"She would be proud to know that you said so," replied Carroll, with a laugh. "I believe you are considered the best judge in the State. Feminine beauty, according to all accounts, is one of your specialties."

Hayne reddened, as if he did not like the intended compliment in this connection.

"I wonder on what the gossips base their information," he said, with a shade of coldness. "I know well enough that my name gets mixed up in half the scandals in the neighborhood of Boston; and yet, nine times out of ten, there's not the faintest excuse for the talk. Perhaps the reason is that I have a sharp eye and a quick ear. Nothing entertains me more than an interesting woman who has begun to take the bit in her teeth. I like to know one of that sort, to converse with her, to utter veiled allusions and watch the effect, even to widen somewhat the scope of her imagination. But to lay every *faux pas* to me is a gross injustice, not only to

myself, but to others who boast of their 'conquests' and are cheated out of the 'credit' that properly belongs to them."

There was no mistaking the ironical vein in which the closing words were uttered.

"I have evidently fallen into the popular error," smiled Thorpe. "I should have said that your shoulders were broad enough to carry all the weight piled on them. Still, if I were put on the stand, I can't recollect a single bit of proof in any case. It has puzzled me a little, too, that I never heard you speak slightly of a woman."

The aquiline nostrils of Mr. Hayne distended. He talked in a very low voice, though in the hubbub about him an ordinary tone would have served to confine his remarks to the ears for which they were intended. During the entire time his eyes remained fixed, as if fascinated, upon the figure of the pretty girl across the room.

"There are two kinds of women," he said, impressively, "against whom no decent man will insinuate anything. One class is composed of those about whose lapses he could testify if he liked; the other class is composed of those of whose shortcomings he knows nothing."

Carroll Thorpe smiled broadly.

"That's sweeping," he said. "You mean that women should, under all circumstances, be exempt from criticism."

Mr. Hayne nodded.

"A woman should have the privilege, with men, of passing for what she pleases to appear."

"It is a pity members of their own sex are not so magnanimous," suggested Thorpe.

"The greatest of pities," replied Hayne, "Ah!" he added, "here comes Brooks."

The gentleman named was slowly making his way toward the pair. He was a little older than the other two, who were perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four, of slender build and with the sloping shoulders often associated with the idea of a student. Although his face was rather pale, however, he gave the impression of possessing the normal amount of strength and of being a man of force and determination. His countenance bore lines of care already, as if he had found life a serious matter, and showed a vivid contrast to both the others, who gave equal evidence of having passed their youth in contentment and ease. His garments were as plain as possible, he eschewed jewelry almost entirely, and he had a hesitation in speech that reminded one of an immature girl.

Most strangers, if invited to guess, would have set him down as an embryo clergyman, or at least a seminary professor. But he was in reality a lawyer, who was already making a name at the bar and had secured possession of a satisfactory practice. He had dark hair, which generally hung, by a contrariness of nature, half across his forehead, and sombre eyes that could not help attracting attention on account of the strange, mysterious quality that shone from their depths.

"Gordon was just saying," remarked Thorpe, when Mr. Brooks reached them, "that he makes it a rule never to speak ill of a woman, whether he knows anything about her or not."

"Oh, don't tell Sidney of my rules!" exclaimed Mr. Hayne, impatiently. "He doesn't know anything about women, any way. What he wants is to have people pointed out and named, and get introductions to those he doesn't know."

Then, in a tone and manner that showed his liking for the young attorney, he proceeded from where they stood

to impart information regarding those present whom his friend had not met, giving their names, mentioning their occupations and other matters that he imagined might be of interest.

"I think you know every man in Boston and vicinity," said Mr. Brooks, pleasantly.

"Well, I know a good many; and in a place like this I make some one tell me about those I don't know. I'm a little quicker than you in some things, and yet I suppose you could talk more interestingly to the Supreme Court than I could."

Apparently considering that his friend's curiosity was confined mainly to the masculine sex, Mr. Hayne made no allusions to the women except to utter such expressions as, "That lady next to him is his wife," or "That elderly lady in gray is the mother of the representative in the Legislature from Brookline."

A fourth gentleman joined the party at this juncture, and was presented to Messrs. Thorpe and Brooks by Mr. Hayne as "Mr. Nelson, one of the Boston Herald staff, whom you ought to know." Mr. Nelson, who was attending Mrs. Bruce's receptions for the first time, was also in search of information and knew that he had reached the right place to find it.

"I understand that the elderly gentleman in that corner, who never leaves his chair, is Mr. Edward Dale," he remarked, consulting his notebook.

"Yes," said Mr. Hayne. "And that good-looking fellow on his right—the one who was just talking to Mrs. Bruce—is his son, Kingdon Dale."

The man last pointed out was, indeed, a "good-looking fellow." He was a little past his majority, tall enough and exceedingly well-proportioned. His clothes fitted him to a nicety. His hair was brown, with a faint tinge

of red, and he combed it in a manner that was most becoming. He had a look of good temper on his fine countenance, mingled at the present moment with a tinge of anxiety, which none but a close observer might have been able to note.

"Is it true that his father has arranged with Mrs. Bruce to have him marry Ida?" asked Carroll Thorpe, with the idea that Mr. Nelson might be interested in that question.

"I've heard so," responded Mr. Hayne, clearing his throat of something that stuck there. "You know the lands of the Bruces here in Newton join those of the Dales, and some people fancy the English way of connecting marriages with real estate transactions. Then, they've been thrown together from childhood. He's only twenty-two and she—"

There seemed nothing to cause the breaking off of the sentence, but the listeners saw that Mr. Hayne had finished all he meant to say on the subject. He was looking again at Miss Ida.

"You know young Mr. Dale personally, I presume?" said Mr. Nelson, when the mantel clock had ticked off fifteen or twenty seconds.

"What, Kingdon?" Mr. Hayne's face lit up. "Yes, we've been intimate for years. We were off at school together. I suppose," he added, reflectively, "if you were to ask him for his closest friend, he would mention my name."

"Then you ought to know exactly what his marital intentions are," said Thorpe, wisely.

"No. There are things he never speaks about, and this is one of them. I used to hint about it," he went on, as if talking to himself, "but it did no good. Indeed, the first I knew of—of Miss Bruce—was by seeing her

photograph on his desk. He told me her name, and said her family lived near his home—but nothing further. I renewed the subject more than once, but made no progress. He had plenty of other pictures there, women as well as men, friends, relations, all the usual assortment; there was nothing to show that he held this one in special regard. But,” the speaker drew a long breath as if he were getting tired, “I have heard the rumors you mention, and I think, very likely, they are true.”

Mr. Nelson remarked, with fervor, that in that case Mr. Kingdon Dale must be a very happy man. Messrs. Thorpe and Brooks silently indicated that he expressed their own conviction.

“Mr. Dale, Sr., looks in wretched health to-night, doesn’t he?” said Mr. Thorpe. “Kingdon almost worships his father, and if you watch him you will see how earnestly and anxiously he gazes in that direction.”

All the members of the group followed the suggestion, and soon had ocular proof that it was true.

“I wish you would present me to Kingdon Dale,” said Mr. Nelson, a moment later, to Mr. Hayne. “You will excuse us,” he added to the others when Mr. Hayne responded that he would do so with pleasure.

Finding that the new acquaintances entered at once into a lively conversation, Hayne soon left them together and strolled about the house, speaking to many persons whom he knew and going almost everywhere, in fact, except toward the spot where Mrs. and Miss Bruce were located. He paused to hear a soprano sing two pieces, which were received with general applause. He talked politics for some minutes with a party of men, who seemed to have an aversion to feminine society, or, perhaps, it was the feminine part of the gathering that did

not care for them. So, going from one set to another, and always finding himself welcome, he came gradually to the chair occupied by the senior Mr. Dale, and, finding another unoccupied, sat down to have a chat with that gentleman.

"A delightful party," he said, affably. "But, then, Mrs. Bruce always manages to have that."

Mr. Dale nodded assent.

"She does, indeed," said he. "My illness prevents my enjoying these things, however, as you younger people do. I would go home, even at this hour, except that I feel it a duty to remain. The Bruces have been my neighbors for twenty years, you know, and one owes much to appearances." His eyes wandered back to the place where Mrs. Bruce and Ida were standing. "Don't you think she looks remarkably well this evening?" he asked, abruptly.

Mr. Hayne started.

"Our hostess? Yes. I had noticed it," he answered, obstinately.

The elder Dale gave an impatient shrug to his shoulders, and winced at a rheumatic twinge that followed the motion.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "Ida. She shines like a star of the first magnitude among all the girls around her."

"Oh!" said Hayne, composing himself. "Yes, she looks very well."

A glance of suppressed indignation came from the old gentleman.

"There's nothing prettier in all the land," he said, sharply. "Nor sweeter. Nor better. I have watched her grow from an infant to this day, and no flower ever came from shoot to stem, from bud to blossom, with greater

loveliness. What a happy man he will be who gathers that flower for his own!"

There was a fascination about the subject that enthralled Gordon Hayne. He had determined not to discuss Miss Bruce with any one again that evening, but the opportunity that he could not resist had come to him.

"Is—is there any one in particular who has that prospect?" he inquired, carelessly, looking toward the farther end of the room, where a lady was about to play a selection on a piano.

Mr. Dale's face brightened. For the instant his pains were forgotten, and he looked happy.

"I may as well tell you," he said, in a low tone, "though you had best not talk with him about it. I would rather you did not. It has been understood—for years—between her mother and me. When the right time comes she is to be my daughter-in-law."

Gordon Hayne wondered if any of the passers would notice a strangeness in his countenance. Schooled to conceal his feelings on most occasions, he knew that a close inspection of his face at this moment would excite remark.

"Ah!" he replied. "I had heard rumors of that possibility. So—it is arranged?"

Mr. Dale hitched his chair nearer.

"Perhaps I am injudicious," he said. "But you are an old friend, a much-liked friend, of my son. I ask you again not to speak of this to him unless he first broaches the matter to you. I cannot truly say that everything is finally arranged, but it amounts to the same thing. Her mother is satisfied—I am satisfied. They are eminently fitted for each other. They have been close friends from babyhood. Neither has ever expressed a fondness for any other person of the opposite sex. It is coming

around all right. They are young—there is no great haste. I only wish,” here Mr. Dale grew very serious, “to see them united before—I die.”

It became incumbent on Mr. Hayne to remark that the disagreeable day foreshadowed would undoubtedly be very long in coming. He had not noticed, he said, that Mr. Dale seemed any worse than he had been for a long time, and was about to mention instances where people of his acquaintance had long outlived their expectation, when his companion interrupted.

“I indulge in no fancies on that score,” he said. “The doctors give me three years at the most. I am quite content. My infirmities are too numerous to make this world worth clinging to. I want to see Kingdon settled, happily married to this beautiful girl, and then I will take the summons without complaint.”

Mr. Hayne bowed, with soberness, as was fitting, and rose with the remark that he noticed a friend to whom he wished to speak.

His friend must have been a denizen of the solar vault, for he went immediately out upon the veranda, and walked up and down with his eyes turned toward the stars. He stayed so long that Thorpe, who was in search of him, came out and found him there.

“Isn’t it time for us to go?” asked Thorpe. “We must either get this 10.45 train to the city or wait till 11.30.”

“All right,” was the answer. “I’m ready. Where’s Brooks? Is he going, too?”

“He’s with Kingdon,” said Thorpe. “He says the last train will do for him.”

Together the gentlemen went to bid good-night to their hostess, with the usual courteous expressions. Miss Ida, in a word or two, sweetly seconded her mother’s hope that she would see them both at her next soiree.

Thorpe took her hand in parting, but Hayne evaded the ceremony, and bowed low instead.

“Good-night, Kingdon,” he said, brusquely, as they passed that gentleman. “No, we’ve our train to catch, and there’s no time for handshaking,” he added, hastening by.

CHAPTER II.

IDA STROKES THE KITTEN.

Mrs. Walden Bruce had done her part fully in relation to the marriage which she meant should take place between Mr. Kingdon Dale and her daughter. She had talked of it as a settled affair to the girl from the time Ida was thirteen years of age. She had cautioned the child as to what her conduct must be under every imaginable situation toward their neighbor's son, and she had found an apt pupil.

No ship was ever better under the guidance of a helmsman. Ida had never felt the least symptom of the complaint called Love for Kingdon Dale. She had fancied that it would be nice to have an establishment of her own, some time, and much better to have a fine-looking gentleman at the head of it than to live an old maid, with parrots and tabby cats. She liked men in the concrete, the pleasant kind of men one is apt to meet in society. If her mother had chosen any one of a dozen others whom she knew, and said to her, "Ida, this is the individual I have selected for your husband," she would have lowered her eyes and answered, "Yes, mamma," with equal contentment.

And Kingdon, though he had seen her frequently (the managing parents had left them a good deal alone) had never spoken a word to her that indicated particular affection. The reason for this is easy to give—he had no more love for her than she had for him. He had never been especially attracted toward any person of the op-

posite sex, though he was fond of the company of "girls," and not at all bashful.

He wanted to please his father, as she wanted to please her mother. He knew, from frequent expressions on the part of his only living parent, that in his mind he was as good as engaged to Ida Bruce. It seemed an inevitable thing, and while, at the time of the evening party referred to in the preceding chapter, he had no intention of defying the paternal will, he wished the date of his wedding postponed as long as possible.

He was not insensible to the attractions of Miss Bruce; he could not be and have the full use of his senses. He had never had his attention called to a more appetizing specimen of the female race. Physically she was very near perfection. Mentally she was above the average. She had paid due attention to the best of teachers and had a good education.

Kingdon believed that if it were not for the fact that his prior claim was generally conceded, she would have plenty of aspirants for her hand. If he was compelled to marry, it might as well be to her as another. Perhaps, he often thought, he might have fallen in love with her of his own accord if things had not been so terribly cut and dried.

There was no sense in paying addresses to a girl who had been marked and ticketed for him ever since she was in short frocks. When the time came she would be handed over and he would have to accept her as if she were a monument or a set of engrossed resolutions. There was nothing to stir the pulses of youth in such a perfunctory affair.

Kingdon was already in business. He had chosen that path in life in preference to any of the professions, and was now the junior partner in a spice and coffee im-

porting house, where he was admitted to have talents and to be of value to the concern.

He was the only child of his father, and there existed much affection between them. The elder Dale had always exacted implicit obedience, and the son had always rendered it. There had been nothing up to the time of which I am writing to cause the least friction between them. To get Kingdon established well in business, and to see him married to the girl of his (the father's) choice—these were the ambitions of Edward Dale's life, and when they should be accomplished, as he had told Gordon Hayne, he was willing to meet the messenger of Death.

Several weeks after the party at Mrs. Bruce's, Kingdon was asked to make a foreign journey, in the interest of his firm—the first one he had ever undertaken. When he came home to announce to his father that he had been selected for this mission, his face flushed with pride.

"I think it a great compliment," said he, "when there are two other partners older than I who have never had the chance to go. And, besides, I have always longed to see Europe, and they have agreed to give me ample opportunity. I am to go first to London, to attend to a little business there; then to Holland, where I have things to settle with the Dutch colony people; and on my way from there to the East I am to be allowed a fair amount of time to see the cities and other objects of interest en route. Mr. Hanson says he thinks it best to give me a chance this time, as I shall probably have to go often hereafter, and I might as well satisfy my curiosity first as last. Isn't it delightful?"

It was not till he had finished these exclamations that Kingdon saw the deep shadow on his father's counte-

nance. Then it struck him all at once that he had been very selfish, and he proceeded without delay to apologize.

"My dear father," he began, "I ought to have thought—I am very sorry—"

"No, don't say that," interposed Mr. Dale. "It will, it is true, be hard for me to part with you for so long, and, perhaps, in my state of health—"

"Forgive me! I will not go!" cried Kingdon.

"On the contrary, you must," was the dignified reply. "It is not for the old to set up their whims against the best interests of the young. I have lived my life, and what there is left is of but little value." The son tried to protest, but was not allowed to speak. "I want to see two things arranged before I go, and they both concern you. One of them looks fair—it is that of your business connections. The other, as you will undoubtedly guess, is—your marriage."

Kingdon, who had been growing pale, turned red at the concluding words. But he only bowed politely.

"Your partners tell me that you are a business man by instinct," pursued Mr. Dale, after a momentary pause. "They prove their high opinion of you by the commission of which you have just told me. To go through this life contentedly a man needs a suitable income and a good wife. I am certain that you will have both."

Kingdon bowed again, reverentially. His father's solicitude, his perfect self-abnegation, impressed him deeply.

"When are you to sail?" asked Mr. Dale.

"In about five weeks."

The father looked thoughtful.

"It should be announced before you go," he said.

"To what do you refer?" asked the son, slightly startled.

"Your engagement to Miss Bruce."

There was great uneasiness in Kingdon's manner, which he strove in vain to conceal.

"You know, at least you understand, father," he murmured, "that no word has ever passed between Ida and myself on the subject."

The elder man raised himself in his chair.

"Quite proper," he commented, with evident satisfaction. "There was no need of spooning when both of you knew what was to come. I have expressed my intentions to you a hundred times, and Mrs. Bruce has done the same to Ida. You are sensible young folks, who know what is good for yourselves. All it wants now is a few sentences from you to her, a dozen words in reply, and then a paragraph in the society papers. You can go over to call on her—to-day; mention that you are going abroad for—how long, do you think?"

"Four or five months."

"Four or five months," repeated Mr. Dale, "and suggest that this seems a proper time to announce your intentions to the world."

Kingdon bit his lips nervously.

"Isn't that hurrying things a little?" he asked. "A man has to get up to that point rather gradually, I should suppose. I've got to ask her if she'll marry me, haven't I, before I suggest announcing our engagement?"

Mr. Dale moved about impatiently in his chair.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed, with signs of coming temper. "Have I, at my age, got to instruct a boy how to approach a girl in a matter of this kind? Nothing is more simple. Just step in and have a little talk; tell her

you are going away; say you want her for your wife, and when she answers that she accepts you, explain why it is best to make the public statement at once—to keep others from bothering her during your absence. It isn't an affair of more than ten minutes, the whole thing!"

Though not at all sure that he could arrange these momentous details in such a short space of time, Kingdon was not ready to enter into an argument with his parent, which would be, he foresaw, to no purpose. So he merely answered, "Very well."

"I'll be hanged if you seem enthusiastic over it!" said Mr. Dale, speaking now with a smile. "That's a pretty fine bundle of goods for a fellow to get, if you did but know it. Ida always reminds me of a dish of peaches and cream. By gad, boy, you ought to thank me for saving it up for you! Some other chap might have got his hands on it by this time except for my vigilance."

The young man tried to laugh, if for nothing else, to please the father he loved so much. But the simile of peaches and cream struck him vividly. That was it, peaches and cream, sweet, fresh, ripe—and cold.

An hour later, thinking it best to have the experience over, he was walking across the fields to his neighbor's house. His father's land stretched for a goodly distance over the country, and that of the Bruces covered as great a space immediately beyond it. When the city should grow out in this direction, as the owners had often said, there would be a fortune in this real estate. Not for them—they would be numbered with the silent majority—but for their children, who were to be united with the land.

As he approached the Bruce residence, Kingdon saw a fair face at one of the windows, and the waving of a handkerchief in welcome. Then its possessor disap-

peared, with an indication that she would meet him at the door.

There was nothing surprising in this freedom. As babies they had dug up the graveled walks and pulled each other in little carts. As boy and girl they had gone together to the same school. There had never been the least conventionality between them. Why should there be any now?

"I wonder if you can guess what I've come over to say?" he asked, a little later, as they were sitting in the library, he with a big staghound at his feet, she with a pet kitten in her lap.

Now, to make doubly sure there would be no miscarriage in this affair, Edward Dale had sent a note to Mrs. Bruce half an hour before, outlining the programme of the day, and that excellent lady had given Ida her final directions. But the girl, with a pardonable evasion, assumed a look of curiosity, which implied that she had not the slightest idea what subject was uppermost in her visitor's mind.

"Well," said Kingdon, "I'm going abroad."

Slightly discomfited by the unexpectedness of the statement, which she had supposed would come later, as an explanation, Miss Bruce colored and could not speak. The young man misunderstood her silence, and thought to himself, with something like alarm, "Can it be that she loves me?"

"Yes," he continued, "my firm wants me to go to the East on a matter of business, that will take four or five months; and I'm to start in five or six weeks from now."

Miss Bruce recovered her outward equanimity with an effort.

"It will be very pleasant for you," she said, with a voice which still had a trace of strangeness in it.

The young man felt again fear that this girl was in love with him—very deeply in love—and that the thought of parting from him for so long was weighing heavily on her heart. With all his soul he hoped it was not so. However, he went on with the message he had been given by his father, feeling that nothing was to be gained by evading the issue.

"Yes," he answered, "it will be decidedly pleasant. It is the sort of journey I have always wanted to make. It pleases father, too; he regards it as a proof that the firm believe in my capacity. He says there is only one thing more that he wants accomplished before he dies." Kingdon grew very serious. "He wants to see me married."

Miss Bruce searched his face so narrowly as he said this that Kingdon was disconcerted. Her serenity seemed to have returned, for she did not flinch as she replied that she appreciated Mr. Dale's sentiments.

"He says a good wife and a good business are the best things a man can have," pursued Kingdon, "though I believe he put the business first," he added, with a little laugh. He wanted to do something to relieve the strain. "Having settled the business part, the question of a wife comes next. And it isn't a question, either, in my case, for—I have never thought of but one woman in that connection."

He blundered on, thinking that he was not doing it very well, but feeling that the surest way to progress was to keep pushing ahead.

"Ah!" said Miss Ida. "I suppose most young men have been in love twenty times before they reach your age."

"Really!" he exclaimed. "Their experience must differ widely, then, from mine. I've never been in love at all, if I understand the symptoms." A spot of red came into

the girl's cheek and stayed there. "There is one girl, however, who was the playmate of my childhood and has been the companion of my youth, whom I esteem highly, and to whom I should consider it a great honor to be allied. Ida, will you marry me?"

He looked furtively at her, and saw that she was smiling good-naturedly. For a moment she made no verbal reply.

"Your answer," said Kingdon, calmly.

"It is 'Yes,'" said the girl. "I will marry you, Kingdon, and I thank you for the honor your proposal does me."

It struck him that this was not the usual way this sort of thing was done. He had asked the momentous question and she had accepted him in much the same manner as they might have bargained for a house or a piano. But if it satisfied her it did him. He had carried out his father's wish, that he should engage himself before he sailed for Europe.

"I don't know much about these matters," he said after taking her hand and giving it a slight pressure, immediately dropping it when this was done, "but I believe the next thing is to inform your mother and my father, and then to send a note to the newspapers."

She nodded.

"Mamma will see to the—newspapers," she said. "It will be all right."

"And the—the time—that has nothing to do with this, has it?" he inquired. "It is a matter for future consideration?"

"Perhaps you had best talk that over with mamma," said Ida, the red spot in her cheek dilating a little. "Not now, I don't mean; but some time before you leave."

Kingdon replied that he would certainly do so, and as

there seemed nothing further to say in this connection he began to mention an engagement of another sort that he was obliged to keep and to pull out his watch and inspect the figures.

Before he had gone, however, Mrs. Bruce came down, attired for a drive, and greeted him.

"I have a bit of news for you," he said, as soon as he could get a chance. "I—I've proposed to Ida, and she has accepted me."

The mother's arms were clasped around the daughter's form as if in an instinct of protection.

"Ida," she cried, in suppressed tones, "is this true?"

For answer the girl hid her face in the maternal bosom, precisely as it had been arranged an hour before that she should do.

"Well," said the widow, wiping away her tears, "I hope—I know you will both be happy. I have seen you together all these years, and I confess the thought has come to me that this might be the result. You are fitted for each other. I do not know any other man to whom I could think of giving my child. Our families have been such friends. It is undoubtedly for the best. Yes, we must look at it that way."

Kingdon went slowly down the steps, for he had already opened the door when his future mother-in-law appeared.

"Will you be kind enough to see that it is put in the papers?" he asked.

"I will attend to it," she replied. Then she added, "I trust this will meet with the entire approval of your father."

"Oh, yes! He will indorse it fully. I know by what he has already said."

"Must you go?" she asked, sweetly.

"Yes, it is necessary. I have an appointment."

Kingdon lifted his hat to the ladies and walked rapidly toward the village. When he was out of hearing Mrs. Bruce had a hurried conversation with her daughter. All that had occurred was narrated to her.

"And he didn't offer to kiss you—nothing of that kind?" said the mother.

"No."

Mrs. Bruce patted on the head the staghound, who was waiting anxiously for her to start on her ride, that he might have a run with the horses.

"He is a very regular young man," was the slow comment. "He will be a very safe husband for you. He's no fly-away. When does he desire the wedding to be?"

"He said he would talk it over with you. To tell the truth, mamma, I don't think he would mind if it never occurred at all."

"Let—us—see," said the lady, ignoring the insinuation. "This is December. He will return by May, probably. About September, that is the time. I will see that he agrees to this, as we must begin on your trousseau."

The carriage came to the door, and Mrs. Bruce entered it, while Ida went slowly up the stairs, softly stroking the kitten she still held in her arms.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU KNOW MY WISHES."

During the time that intervened before his date of sailing, Kingdon Dale and Ida Bruce indulged in none of the pretty arts known as love-making. Their engagement seemed, in fact, to make their conversation more distant than formerly. It was as if some trouble had come between them, something that must be regarded too seriously for gayety.

Kingdon called several times a week and passed an hour or so in the company of his fiancée. She came once with her mother to his father's house and dined with them. At table the affairs of the young couple were alluded to in a businesslike way, and the date which Mrs. Bruce had fixed for the wedding was brought up without exciting a protest from those interested. Kingdon did not see any feasible way to escape the net that was being woven about him, and he thought it wisest to assent to the plans that best satisfied his invalid father.

He had no doubt that he would have to marry this girl some time. The elder people had arranged everything thus far, why not let them finish it? There was the foreign journey in between, at any rate. That would give him a breathing spell, and a chance to think, untrammelled by his parent's presence. He was like a man in a great crowd pushed along without his own volition.

Edward Dale bore the pain of parting with his son very well. Now that they understood each other there was nothing to fear. If he should die before Kingdon

returned, thought the father, the announced engagement would make everything right. Kingdon was an honorable young man, who would not break his plighted word. His future was safe. The business talents of his son had already been recognized. The selection of a wife had been made, a girl not only beautiful and good, but possessed of something handsome in the way of expectations—an item not to be despised in these days when dollars and cents count for so much.

The farewells between Kingdon and his future wife were courteous if not tender. They had a genuine esteem for each other. Both considered their future condition as absolutely settled. They were to live in the closest of relations for perhaps half a century, nobody could say, beginning eight months hence. How fond they would learn to be of each other, time alone would tell. He fancied that Ida was already a victim of a passion which she could not show too plainly while he kept himself so much aloof. She, on her part, considered him one whose affection for a wife would be a matter of slow but constant growth, and was willing to risk that consummation.

"I suppose you cannot tell exactly when you will return?" she said, interrogatively. "It depends on the way your business turns out, doesn't it?"

"Yes," he replied. "But they think at the office that I can finish everything so as to get here, by the latest, before June 1st, perhaps a month sooner." And he found himself counting mentally, "July is two, August is three, September—less than four months after I come home I shall have to go to live with this girl!"

Then she asked him again, for they had debated the matter several times, where he expected to make his

stops. He detailed his route as well as he could, and talked of the things he expected to see.

When his baggage was all packed for the New York evening train, he walked over for his final call, and spent an hour in saying nothing special.

"I shall have to go," he said at last, consulting his watch. "It takes time, you know, at the station for checking and buying tickets. Then my dear old dad will have a lot to say at the last minute. So, good-bye."

He held out his hand, just as he used to do, except with a little more reserve, and Ida took it, pressed it, and let it go, as if it were that of any ordinary friend. As for an embrace, the thought of it never even entered his mind.

"Let me call mamma," said Ida, detaining him an instant.

"Mr. Dale is obliged to hasten," she exclaimed, as that lady made her appearance.

She had never called him "Mr." before in her life except in the presence of strangers, and he noticed the expression.

"Good-bye, Kingdon," said Mrs. Bruce, descending the stairs and giving him a warm clasp of the fingers. She would not give him any dignity titles, not she. "We shall think of you hourly, and look for frequent letters. I wish you would cable when you land in England. There is always a peril of the sea, and we shall feel better to hear from you direct."

"I shall cable to father," he answered, "and I will tell him to send you immediate word. I shall be safe enough. Good-bye, Mrs. Bruce. Good-bye, Ida. If I wait any longer I shall lose my train."

The two ladies watched him striding across the path in the snow that was always well-beaten between his

home and theirs; and when he had disappeared from view they re-entered the house and conversed for the next hour upon the situation. The preparations for the bride's attire entered into the talk to a large degree, for to Mrs. Bruce's mind eight months was none too long a period to devote to this important subject.

"He is all right," commented the widow, in a satisfied way, as she noted a slight cloud on her daughter's brow. "I'd put my trust in that kind of man sooner than in one of those exuberant fellows who protest their fealty every moment. He is the kind that will wear well. You won't have to fear that some other woman is going to ensnare him the minute he gets out of sight."

A widow of middle age is supposed to be a shrewd judge of the opposite sex. Whether Mrs. Bruce answered this description will appear later in these pages. Her assurance certainly pleased Ida, for she rewarded her for it with a most filial kiss and smiled radiantly into her face.

The parting between Kingdon and his father was a most affecting one. Although the parent suppressed his tenderest sentiments, lest he should inflict pain by being too demonstrative, Kingdon knew well that the separation was full of distress to him. He resolved that he would cut his journey shorter than he had intended, and made a remark to that effect, but Mr. Dale responded that this was what he particularly wished him not to do.

"It is your first trip abroad," he said, "and it ought to be of great value to you. I only wish I were well enough to go, for I am familiar with most of the countries through which you will pass, and could be of value in pointing out the places of chief interest. Take your time, my dear boy, since your partners are willing you should do so. On your next journey you will, I hope, be

able to take your wife, and that will add immensely to your pleasures. It is well said that 'Happiness was born a twin.' The rightly constituted man is always happier when he has some one to share his delights with him."

Kingdon bowed, for he did not feel that his enthusiasm on this matter was great enough to vent itself in words.

"And, if anything should happen to me during your absence," added the father, pausing to place his hand on his side, where a sudden twinge had caught him, "you know my wishes. Let them be sacred to you."

There was a night ride to New York, a trip across the city, and before noon the great ocean steamer had begun her journey on the deep. Kingdon felt the exhilaration of the traveler who has this sensation for the first time. He witnessed the good-byes of the thronging crowds on the dock; the beautiful panorama of land and water; he felt the force of the waves under him, the gentle jar of the machinery, the breezes coming cold and refreshing up the Bay.

He wandered from side to side of the steamer, catching the most interesting of the sights presented. When he responded to the lunch call he found the immense dining saloon sparsely filled—for the season was not the most popular one for going East—and yet fuller than he ever saw it again until the boat's prow cut the muddy waters of the Mersey.

Lunch over, he walked the deck, getting acquainted with several of his fellow-passengers, after the manner of voyagers. They were to be companions for six days, and formal introductions were out of the question in most cases. It was simply, "My name is Jones; here is my card," and "Mine is Dale," and the exchange of a paste-board for the one received.

Of course, in a world as small as this, numerous mutual friends were discovered in the midst of conversation. Dale knew John S. Johnson, the lawyer, who occupied a suite of rooms opposite Jones' brother. And Jones was distantly related by marriage to Gilbert Gray, who married Miss Gladys Newcombe of Chicago, a second cousin of Dale's.

The freemasonry of the cigar, which unites most Americans away from home, was brought into requisition. Only the most misanthropic of men can fail to enjoy the society of his fellow-passengers on an Atlantic liner, or any other steamer in the world, where there are people whose language he understands.

Kingdon was mercifully exempt during the week that followed from anything more than slight qualms of seasickness, and kept his feet on all occasions. He enjoyed the trip from start to finish, and was really sorry when the lighter came alongside and conveyed him to the dock at Liverpool.

It is unnecessary for the purposes of this story to follow his movements closely across Great Britain and the continent. Suffice it to say that he had his eyes open and visited as many points of interest as his stay would allow. In due time he took his steamer for the islands where his business affairs led him, reached his port safely, transacted the affairs on which he had come with signal success, and started on his return to Europe extremely well satisfied with the result of his journey.

Among his fellow-passengers on the return was an English army captain named Leonard Rivers, and his young daughter, a girl of about twenty years of age. Captain Rivers had seen foreign service in many countries and was now making his way home by slow stages, being in a very low condition of health. His real purpose

was to reach England in time to be buried beneath its sod, for he had a passionate love for the land of his birth, though nearly all his life had been spent in doing her service abroad.

Kingdon became well acquainted with both of them, and learned to like them well. He passed much of his time on the steamer in conversation with Captain Rivers, whose stories of army experiences entertained him greatly. He also walked for long stretches of time with Miss Margaret Rivers, her father being unable to promenade the decks, except for a very brief period, and then quite slowly.

The Captain was not yet fifty, and in a healthy country would probably have been now in the prime of life. He was paying the penalty of tropic suns and a diet that was never made for northern stomachs. It seemed unlikely that he would live another year, and he himself was fully aware of his condition. He talked freely with Kingdon, the burden of his speech being regret at having to leave Margaret without adequate protection. He had never been able to save anything out of his pay, and she would have to depend on the good offices of some distant relations or her own efforts. Tears came to the eyes of the gallant soldier as he rehearsed these things to the sympathetic ears of the American, who did not know how to offer much consolation in such a very delicate case.

Margaret Rivers was a good specimen of the wholesome English girl; not what could be called a beauty, but with an honesty and simplicity of countenance that won immediate regard. She was more slender than the type to which she belonged, for we learn to associate robustness with the British maiden, who is apt to have a figure

modeled after that of Hebe, and to carry the English rose in both of her full cheeks.

Margaret had spent much of her life in the East, which had reduced her natural weight and lent a paleness to her face that did not belong there of right. She was of medium height, with very dark hair and eyes that matched it, neither, however, being black. Her attire was very plain, partly, perhaps, from necessity, partly from choice. A sweet, lovable, trusting and trustworthy girl—this is what Mr. Dale decided that she was before he had known her an hour.

People get to be very confidential aboard ship, especially when, as in this case, they become attracted toward each other to the exclusion of all the other passengers. Kingdon had occasion to know that many of the English officers that one meets abroad resemble the simile of Dickens—"A retired bulldog on half-pay." The privations of their lives have too frequently soured their dispositions and made them anything but agreeable traveling companions. Captain Rivers had conserved the natural courtesy of his disposition through all. The fact that he was of Irish blood on his mother's side may have had something to do with this. He thanked the American many times for the interest the latter showed in Margaret and was pleased at the intimacy that developed between them.

"It's a pity," he said, "that the young should be hampered in their movements by the infirmities of their elders. I like to have Margaret walk with her own free step instead of dragging at a snail's pace at my side. I can see that she is looking brighter and better in every way since you took her in charge."

The couple talked of a thousand things in those long walks—she of life in the Indies and in Cape Colony, he

of things American, in which she was deeply interested. She had formed ideas of our country of the most magnificent description and had wished very much she could be permitted to see it at some time. That, however, she said, with a sad smile, she would now never be able to do.

Kingdon told her of his father, of his business, of almost everything, in short, except Miss Ida Bruce and his engagement to her. He put that out of his mind as much as he could, and thought it the last subject to discuss in the presence of this interesting little woman.

Going and coming to the spice islands, Mr. Dale was obliged, naturally, to pass through the Suez Canal. On the outward trip he repressed his desire to get a glimpse of the wonders of Egypt, feeling that he ought to attend to the business of his firm before taking any more time for his own pleasure. Before returning, however, he received a letter advising him to disembark for this very purpose, and spend a week or two at least in the land of the Pharaohs.

Captain Rivers continued so ill that Mr. Dale made him promise to break his journey when they should arrive at Ismalia, and rest over a steamer with him. Knowing that the financial question was a powerful one with his new friend, he showed him a list of pensions at Cairo in his Baedeker, where for a very slight remuneration board and room could be obtained. He also, feeling that this would be of great influence upon the father, spoke of the value to Margaret of seeing the Pyramids and the Sphynx. The result was that the Captain agreed to the proposal, to the delight of his daughter, who wanted to go ashore for the double reason of resting from her journey and of being a little longer in the society of Mr. Dale, whom she had begun to like exceedingly.

But it had been foreordained that the English officer was never to see the shores of Egypt with his mortal eyes. The night before arrival Mr. Dale was aroused in his berth by a steward, who said he was wanted without delay by Miss Margaret Rivers. He dressed with the utmost haste and hurried to her cabin, where he learned from a stewardess that Captain Rivers was in the midst of a violent paroxysm, from which the ship's doctor said he was not likely to recover.

On either side of the now unconscious man the daughter and Mr. Dale passed the rest of the sad night. Nothing could be done for the dying, but Kingdon felt that his presence was a material support to the weeping girl, who had no other friend on the steamer.

When the red sun rose across the wave the exhausted body yielded up the spirit, and Margaret, beside herself with grief, threw her arms around Mr. Dale's neck and sobbed frantically against his bosom.

CHAPTER IV.

MARGARET REFUSES TO LISTEN.

It is not easy for the average young man to occupy the position of consoler to a pretty girl, in an hour of great grief to her, without going a trifle further than the necessities of the case warrant. Margaret was wild with her loss, and clung closely to the only other friend she had near, in the extremity of her affliction. In comforting her, Kingdon found himself giving utterance to endearing terms, and even to slight embraces, and the manner in which these manifestations were received encouraged him to continue them; for who could resist such an opportunity to comfort the sorrowing?

"Do not sob so violently, my—darling!" he would exclaim. "Remember your father is free now from all the pain and suffering he has undergone."

"Oh, yes!" was her reply. "But he was my only one. Now that he is gone I feel all alone in the world."

"No, no; you are not alone, Margaret! You have a friend left still in me. I shall not desert you, dearest. I will see you safe home in England."

His arms held her close to his heart as he spoke. He was acting the part of consolation with a vengeance.

"You are so kind!" she murmured. "I don't know what I could have done without you. But (sob) what shall I do in England without my (sob) father? I have only distant relations, and they have cares enough of their own. There is no place left for me, Mr. Dale. England is no longer the happy land of my dreams, since

he cannot share it with me. There is nothing to attract me there now, more than to any other spot on earth."

To this he made suitable reply, prophesying that when the newness of her grief was past she would see things in another light. He asked her, as soon as he thought wise, if she wanted her father's body sent home, offering to make all arrangements. But she said, with another burst of tears, that Cairo was as much English soil as Devonshire, and that the soldiers' cemetery there was the best place for the interment. They were to arrive at Ismalia the next evening, and Cairo is but a few hours ride into the interior.

"Besides," she added, with a frankness that was habitual with her, "it would cost much more than I can afford to send the casket home. I have talked with him about it many times, and he has said he only asked to lie under the shadow of the English flag."

Mr. Dale remembered having heard his dead friend make a similar statement, and acquiesced at once in the idea that this was the best thing under the circumstances. He volunteered to see the authorities and find out exactly what to do.

"Everything must be plain," said Margaret, trying to wipe the tears from her face. "The very plainest possible. To be honest with you, Mr. Dale, I have not a penny that can be wasted."

"Excuse me for saying," he replied, "that I shall attend to all the financial matters. Captain Rivers was my personal friend, and I wish to pay every expense connected with his interment."

"You ought not to do that," she protested, though an inward satisfaction was manifest at the load it would lift from her shoulders.

"Why not?" said he. "There is no reason why I

should not do even more. I can let you have twenty or thirty pounds for yourself, just as well as not, and never miss it. I would not want you to arrive on English ground with your purse empty."

But to this she entered an instant demurrer. To take charity from him was the last thing to which she would consent. He put it in the most favorable light he could think of, but she did not swerve. For the father, perhaps, she might allow his kindness; for herself it was not to be thought of. She could reach home with what she had. There would be a small allowance due from the War Department; and then it would be for her to seek employment. Charity she would not accept, and she thought, with a sudden pain at the heart, least of all from him.

It was no time to urge her, and Mr. Dale dropped the subject for the present. At Ismalia, when he could leave her temporarily, he went to arrange by telegraph for the obsequies, which were taken in charge by one of the officials, to his great satisfaction. He returned to Margaret and told her what had been done, and she rewarded him with a warm clasp of one of his hands in both her own. She had grown much calmer during his absence.

"How can I ever thank you?" she exclaimed, as he took a place on the sofa, which she made vacant at her side.

"It is little enough," he answered. "I wish it were a thousand times more."

"I should have died without you," she murmured, nestling nearer. "You seem to me like a real brother, or what I suppose one would be, for I am an only child."

It was a bond of fellowship between them when he said that he also had never had brother or sister, and it gave a sort of excuse for the kiss which he pressed on

her forehead, pushing back her disheveled hair for the purpose. She continued to hold one of his hands, and the sensation was not disagreeable. But after a little while a sense of the proprieties came over him, and he made an excuse to leave her for the present.

As he was crossing the hall he met one of the servants, who handed him some letters that had just arrived. One of them was from his father, and this he read first:

"I am feeling much better of late, and perhaps I shall yet live for years. I think it is on account of my pleasure at your prospects, which is the nearest thing to my heart. I have seen a member of your firm, who says you have made a marked success on your trip. Then I receive a call daily from Mrs. Bruce or Ida, when the latest condition of the bridal trousseau forms the main subject of conversation. Just think how near it is—September! Ah, you are a lucky young dog, with such a bride in store; so young, so pretty, so good, and—a thing not to be despised—an heiress to a comfortable fortune. I need not caution you to be most circumspect in your conduct during the remainder of your journey, for a clean record is the best present a man can bring to his wife. Temptations must fail before the prospect of enveloping this superb creature in your arms, such a short time away. Ida says you have written but seldom, but I tell her some of the letters may have been lost, you have moved about so much. Write a little oftener to both of us, but if there is time for only one, write to Ida. She will come over and tell me she has heard from you, and I shall know you are well and safe."

Kingdon felt a twinge of conscience as he read the loving words. He had not written to his father as often as he ought since—since, especially, the date of his meeting with Captain Rivers and his daughter. To Ida

he had written not more than twice a month, and he had done little then beside telling of the scenes he had passed through, much after the manner of a newspaper correspondent.

Not once had he given way to an expression of affection, nor had he alluded in the remotest degree to their engagement or approaching marriage. In her answers she had made no reference to these things, either; but it was not to be expected she would do so when he had so studiously avoided the subject. Kingdon resolved that he would write more frequently, in accordance with his father's request, both to him and to Ida. The news of his parent's improved health gave him great delight, and he reflected with pleasure on the nearness to the time when they would again look each other in the face.

As soon as he had written and mailed his replies to the firm and to his father, Mr. Dale escorted Miss Rivers to the train, which already bore the body of the dead soldier, and they set out for Cairo. The funeral took place on the day after their arrival, the hot weather in that country making delays impossible. The simple military service was read, the salute fired by the squad, and the desiccating soil of Egypt began its work.

Miss Rivers bore the strain better than he could have expected. She leaned upon him in everything. Not only did she commit to his care the disposition of her father, but of herself. She put her slender purse in his hand with the utmost confidence, saying that he would find the least expensive route for her to take in purchasing the tickets for England.

Believing that a diversion was the best thing for her, he began on the second day after the funeral to take her with him in his drives about Cairo. Together they saw

the wonderful works of long extinct men, which have made this vicinity the mecca for travelers of all lands. Together they strolled through the ancient bazars, the mosques, and the beautiful new quarter, fringed by the old, laid out like a piece of Paris itself.

Their conversation during these days was held in a low key, and those who met them realized that some recent misfortune tempered their steps. It was undoubtedly better to divert the mind of the young girl than to permit her to bury herself in her grief. To Margaret the thoughtfulness of her escort was an anodyne of surpassing power.

After studying all the ways that might take one to England, Mr. Dale mapped out a route that would include Malta and Gibraltar. There was no reason on the part of Miss Rivers for haste, and he wanted very much to visit both of these fortresses on his way home.

The fares to Malta on some of the smaller lines were much lower than those which sailed direct for Brindisi, there connecting with the railways across the continent of Europe, though the latter were by far more expeditious.

He explained the difference to Margaret, who answered that she would leave it entirely to him. If he was going in the same direction, she added, with charming naivete, she would certainly prefer that route by all means.

There was no need to spend a long time at Alexandria, the port from which the start for Malta would be made. A couple of days would suffice for all the sights at that point. So the intervening time was passed at Cairo, which, above all places, holds the attention of the traveler as long as his good fortune permits him to remain. The endless kaleidoscopic display in the streets entranced

him—the donkey-drivers and their beasts; the camels, bearing brides and burdens; the stately Arabs; the veiled women; the voyagers from all parts of the world in their native costumes; the Saratoga-like throngs at the magnificent hotels. Both of the young people with whom we have particularly to deal would have been glad to stay here a month longer, although the last of March had arrived, and the temperature was steadily growing warmer.

At Alexandria they stopped at the Hotel Abbat, where they had the best meal they had enjoyed for months. The steamer on which they were to sail was the *Arcadia*, a boat that had seen better days, but was still seaworthy. Upon going aboard Mr. Dale had a moment of heart-sinking at the primitiveness of the arrangements for passengers; but Miss Rivers, who had traveled a great deal, said she was sure they would do very well, and he suppressed the criticisms that rose to his lips.

A tornado struck the ship soon after getting into the open sea, and continued with unabated force for most of the five days which the voyage consumed. Margaret was as good a sailor as the master himself, Captain Worthington, who seemed to prefer the deck to the cabin, even in the worst of weather. She had not a single qualm, but Mr. Dale was obliged to lie in his berth or on the sofa in the smoking-room for several of the most tempestuous days. The girl tended him assiduously, and he was hardly sorry for his condition, when it brought him so much kind attention from a companion he was learning to prize so highly.

He was certainly glad, however, when the great walls of the fortress of Malta broke on his vision, and set foot on shore with as good a will as he remembered to have felt on any occasion.

Quarters were secured at one of the hotels, and the couple set out to view the island. Famous for its relics of the Knights of Malta, it had a hundred interesting things to visit, both in and out of the capital city of Valetta.

In the evening they strolled up to the little park by the ramparts, where the sweet peace of nature sits in strange contrast to the deadly preparations for war on every side. There were cannon to right of them, cannon to left of them, cannon behind them, and the silver sea in front. It was plain that nothing but treachery could wrest this iron jewel from the British crown. It could be secured only by such methods as operated in the case of Gibraltar, and in these days that is practically impossible. Beneath these guns a hundred merchantmen might rest secure. To possess Malta is to control the Mediterranean.

Kingdon Dale thought of all these things, and yet at this time he cared little for them. In his brain there had lodged the germ of an idea quite unconnected with anything naval or military. Until lately he had taken it for granted that his acquaintance with Miss Rivers must end in a fortnight, at the farthest. Now he began to mutiny against such a fate, and to say to himself that he could not, would not, endure it.

"When does our boat go?" she asked, after one of their long silences.

"There are two boats," he said. "One leaves to-morrow morning, at a very early hour. I did not think you would care to go on that, especially as I need a little longer rest after my attack of *mal de mer*."

"And the next one?"

"It will be something like a week. I thought, perhaps, you would be willing to remain a little longer rather than leave me here alone."

"Willing!" she echoed. "It is exactly what I should prefer—to stay with you to the very latest minute!"

The tears gushed from her eyes, and answering drops filled his own.

"Then you don't feel tired yet of my company?" he suggested, in a low tone.

She bit her lips and stifled the sobs that came to her chest. She shook her head decidedly.

"Margaret," he said, clasping her shoulders with his arms, "I wish we were never to part!"

It was an open avowal of what had been in his mind for days, but when he knew the words were uttered he was alarmed at the sound. And his feelings were not lessened in that respect when she turned spasmodically and buried her face against his coatsleeve.

"My darling," were his next words, "this is a very cruel world. Sit down here and let me talk to you. It can do no harm to hear a little of the truth, unpleasant as the facts may be."

She obeyed without demur, and sat looking at him as if he were a judge who had her fate in his hands—as, indeed, he was.

"I want you to forgive me in advance," he pleaded, "if anything I say gives you a thousandth part of the pain it gives me to tell it."

"I am sure," she answered, warmly, "that you are the soul of honor."

He was not, and her confident words cut him deeply.

"You shall decide," he said, "when I have finished. I am engaged to be married—"

She drew away from him as if a sword had pierced her side, and started to rise, but he held her down.

"Not yet," he said. "Listen till I have finished; otherwise the good opinion you have formed of me will

be ruined, and there will be no pity for me in your heart."

She gave up the struggle, and, turning her face in an opposite direction, waited for him to proceed.

"When I was a child, too young to be told of it, my father arranged my marriage. The little girl who was growing up for me had a mother who was equally determined that the match should take place. Between this girl and me there has never been the slightest manifestation of love from that day to this. I have seen her frequently; we have been simply friends, no more. My father has been for a long time in a condition of health which makes excitement dangerous. He cannot bear the least opposition without flying into a temper that might easily be fatal. Before I came from home he insisted that I should make a formal proposal of marriage—"

A shiver ran across the young form by his side, and the hand he placed upon her arm was firmly pushed away.

"A—formal—proposal," he continued, after a momentary pause. "I had never known what the feeling of love was. I believed myself incapable of that sentiment. I did not want to marry any one, and but for my filial duty I never would have done so with any person I had then met. But I had tried to be a dutiful son to a father whom I adored, and who has had for years no one to care for but me. I did as he requested. I went through the formalities, to his great satisfaction. Before I left home on my present voyage I had promised to marry this young lady next September. But—listen one moment longer, Margaret—I never shall marry her now, if I live a million years!"

Miss Rivers faced about and gazed with distended eyes at the speaker.

"You will break your word!" she cried, reproachfully. "I did not think that of you, Mr. Dale."

"*My word!*" he repeated. "Would you—*you*—tell me to link my life to one for whom I have no affection, when there is another who holds my fullest and truest love? Would you—"

She stopped him in his impetuous declaration, rising and standing at his side.

"One moment," she said, sharply. "Whom do you mean? Who is it that you love like this?"

"My darling—" he answered, in the same strain, but she stopped him again.

"You refer to me?"

"Most earnestly and sincerely, yes!"

"Then I must ask you to bring your confession—I should say, your recital—to a close."

He stared like one drunken.

"Then you do not care for me at all?" he ejaculated, thunderstruck.

"You have no right to ask me. You have treated me as a friend, until now as a very sincere one. But to tell me of your engagement to another and in the next breath to say you love me—that is a very near approach to insult."

Against this he protested with all his might, refusing, in spite of her urging, to be silent.

"To tell you the truth is to lose your esteem, I see," he said, in conclusion.

"You may still retain that if this matter is allowed to end here," she replied. "If you persist in saying anything more to me that I do not wish to hear I shall bid you good-bye."

He was still for some seconds, and when he spoke it was desperately, like one who has received a terrible blow.

"You shall not say good-bye to me," he faltered, "until your boat or mine bears us out of the sight of each other. If you insist I will say nothing more in relation to you. But let me repeat that I shall never marry the lady to whom a mistaken sense of duty made me give my promise. I will refuse to blight two lives—hers and mine. I know now what is to—I mean that I can conceive no greater sacrilege than to wed where I cannot love, to join my life to one woman when my heart, my very soul is—Margaret, you are too hard! I cannot defend myself when I am hampered in my phrases."

He waited, hoping for some remission of her command, however slight, but she did not speak.

"It may seem to you that I am wrong," he said, impressively. "But if you had promised to wed a man and found that all your love had been stirred into life by another, can you conceive anything worse than to enter upon a life of falsehood merely because of a promise made in an unguarded hour?"

She stood before him with an expression of sympathy and grief written on her countenance.

"I am no casuist," she answered. "I only know that promises of marriage are meant to be kept. I understand the pain of which you speak. For I, too, have had 'all my love stirred into life,' and yet I would not take one who belonged to another, though my loss hurried me, as perhaps it may, to the grave."

"Margaret!" he cried, springing to his feet.

"Not another word, I pray you," she protested. "I have borne all I can. If you are the friend I believe you, let me go—for the present. I wish to lie down—I must have rest."

Bowing profoundly, and with a strange mixture of sensations in his brain, Mr. Dale walked dizzily from her room.

CHAPTER V.

"THEN I MUST LIVE SINGLE."

Kingdon Dale walked up and down in his chamber for hours, turning the matter over in his mind. He had never met a girl he liked so well, never one for whose close acquaintance he cared. She had said, almost in so many words, that all her love had been stirred into life by him. Was her sentiment of his duty to Ida Bruce to wreck the ideal life that might come to him and to Margaret? She was unreasonable in the high estimate she put upon such an engagement as his.

No, he would not let her destroy his hopes and wreck her own life into the bargain. He would save her from herself, if there was any way to accomplish it.

And there was a way; there must be one, with so much at stake!

His head was very hot. He bathed it from the ewer that stood in his room. He brushed his hair carefully and looked at his reflection in the glass. He saw the perturbed countenance, the heavy eyelids, the set mouth. And beyond it all he saw the features of the woman he adored.

He would not let her force him into a course so hateful, unless her will was stronger than his.

Miss Rivers kept to her room the whole of the evening, and he strolled discontentedly up and down the steep streets, and in and out of the military club, to which he had been introduced by his consul. Before going to bed he smoked innumerable cigars and read a lot

of old newspapers, until he knew their contents by heart. During the night he awoke a dozen times; and when he slept his dreams were filled with visions of Margaret, always trying to escape him, but frustrated each time before she quite succeeded in getting away.

He was hanging about the hotel disconsolately when, to his surprise and joy, a waiter came to say that Miss Rivers wished him to call on her as soon as he could find it convenient. Not pausing a second he ran upstairs, three steps at a time, to her apartment, and answered her "Come in!" without a moment's delay.

Before he could speak a word, she exhibited a letter she had just received and began to talk about it.

"I wish, in the first place," she said, tremulously, "to beg your pardon for troubling you with more of my affairs. But I have no one else now—here—or perhaps elsewhere."

She paused, and he saw that something agitated her extremely; something, he rightly conceived, that must be contained in that letter.

"I hope I need not say," he answered, "that I am now and always at your entire service."

"Oh, but this is beyond your power, or any one's, to remedy!" cried Margaret, with a sob in her voice that she was trying her best to choke down. "I—I cannot tell it to you; read it for yourself."

She thrust the missive into his hands, and, rising, went to another part of the room, where she threw herself, in a burst of tears, upon a sofa.

Much distressed at her attitude, but hampered by the restrictions she had placed upon him yesterday, he refrained from following her, and began to read the letter that had caused the trouble. First he scanned the envelope, which had an English stamp and bore a post-

mark indicating that it was mailed in a town in Derbyshire.

"My Dear Niece," it ran, "Your letter informing us of your father's severe illness, and the probability of his early demise, has filled us with deep regret. I wish it were possible for me to invite you to visit us, or to make your home here, should you be left an orphan, but such is not the case. My daughter's husband has recently died, and she, with her three children, are now living entirely at my charge. The house is literally full, and my purse is feeling the severity of the drain as well. I gather from Leonard's letters that he is near the end, and have tried to think of some way to aid you, but it is impossible. My advice is for you to go straight to London and seek employment. You must not be too particular. Do the best you can, and when you are settled write me again.

"Nettie sends love. Your affectionate aunt,

"MYRA SWAIN."

The words of this epistle were blurred before the eyes of the reader, as he realized what a pang they must have given to that slender, sobbing figure; but with this thought came another that caused his heart to swell. In this desperate position, might not Margaret relent a little in her attitude toward him?

"You were so severe last night," he began, "that I hardly know what I may be allowed to say—"

She roused herself and presented her wet face for his inspection.

"Do not allude to that, I beg," she said. "This letter makes me sufficiently miserable without recalling the pain that conversation gave me."

"But I am left perfectly helpless," he protested, "to offer you any assistance or advice unless you indicate that I shall not receive another dismissal before I can explain myself. I told you last night how dear you were

to me—don't speak, I am not trying to repeat it, but only to remind you where I stand. You have refused to listen to the proposal of marriage I was about to make, or to anything that connects our future beyond the next few days. I would like to help you in a pecuniary way, if you will permit me. Beyond that I see nothing that it is in my power to do."

She heard him with a trembling of the lips, and a going and coming of the color in her cheek.

"Oh, if you could comprehend," she cried, "what a true friend I think you, and how impossible it is that I should take a penny of yours, which it is unlikely I could ever return! That note of my aunt—she is an aunt by marriage only—leaves me a beggar. I have money enough to reach her home, and I had hoped that through her influence I might be placed in some menial position where I could at least earn my bread. That expectation is at an end. All that is left for me is to go, as she advises, to London, and seek in that immense city a chance to wrest a crust from a million others as needy, perhaps more so than I. I wish I could keep from telling you this—it breaks my heart to parade my poverty—but there is no one else in all the world to whom I can speak, and I must unbosom myself or die."

He told her she was quite right to confide her trouble to him, and that she might rely upon his sympathy and consideration to the fullest extent. He could not see, however, why she should object to a gift of money, which he could spare as well as not, and which it was very evident she would need.

"Can't you—can't you understand that?" she asked, earnestly. "Not even when I have confessed that I love you with all my soul? I could go to the strangers in this hotel, perhaps to the passengers on the steamer that

takes me to England, and tell them my story, with an appeal for help. But not to you! I would rather starve here in Malta than accept anything from your generous hand. Can't you understand that? Can't you?" she repeated, gazing at him, with parted lips.

"I must admit that I cannot," he responded. "Here is the situation as it appears to me: I have a certain sum of money which I can spare; you, through no fault of your own, are in need of it; what is wanted is the simple exchange of that sum from my pocket to yours."

She rose, took a few steps across the room, and sat down in a chair near the window.

"But this money," she said, "you would not give to every applicant who might be in my situation. You offer it solely because of your unusual affection for me. Is it not so?"

His answer was delivered in a tone which showed his impatience, though he tried hard to conceal it.

"I do not know in what school you were reared," he said, "but your points are more intricate than any I ever before heard. If a friend who cares very much for you is not to be permitted to render assistance, who is? Should you persist in maintaining this attitude you will add a deeper pain to the one you gave me yesterday, and possibly live to repent it."

"I was reared in a school," she answered, "that taught me to avoid everything which strikes a direct blow to my pride and my sense of justice. If I was sure to return this money to you, I would accept it as a loan, with many thanks. But I see no way in which I can do so. In all the sky there is no ray of sunlight for me. I have been educated in a manner that will spoil me for a servant. My father's income, while small, has enabled us to live independently. My manners are not sufficient-

ly humble for a lady's maid, or even a governess of children, should I be lucky enough to draw so grand a prize in the lottery of London life. If I take your money I shall merely spend it in trying to prolong for a few weeks an existence which has lost its charm."

His position was a difficult one. He could not put his arm about her now, as he had done when her father died and press a kiss of friendship on her forehead. She had withdrawn from all that peremptorily.

"I have even been thinking," she continued, after a pause, "that it is useless for me to leave this place. My means will last longer if I remain, and the chance of employment in some one's kitchen is as good here as elsewhere."

He told her she distressed him intensely by these statements, and again pressed upon her the reasonableness of accepting a loan or a gift from him. He professed to believe that her prospect of repaying it was as good as that of the average borrower. But he did not convince her.

"There is another thing I would suggest," he said, when the right opportunity seemed to have arrived, "if I were sure you would consider it in its true light. In the firm of which I am a partner there are several girls always employed, at writing and keeping accounts. If you will go to America I will guarantee you a permanent place, with a salary three times as large as you could expect in England—the same that is paid to others of your intelligence and capacity," he explained, as he saw her doubting expression. "To advance you the price of the voyage is nothing more than has been done in such cases a hundred times, a mere business affair. If you refuse this I shall not know what to think of you."

She listened with the utmost attention, and then declined the offer without delay.

"Unreasonable as it may seem to you, I must refuse," she said. "But I will be perfectly fair and give the cause. In your office I should perpetually be brought in contact with you—should see you, at least, passing in and out of the place. I should see your wife, perhaps, and by-and-by your children. No, Mr. Dale, I have not strength enough to bear it."

"Because you love me?" he asked, incredulously.

"Because I love you," she said, with fervor. "I am willing to say so, as often as you wish. There is no wrong to your betrothed in doing this, so that I hold fast to my determination not to cheat her out of her rights. I have to think," she continued, ecstatically, "of what I should suffer if I were engaged to you, and she came between us. To my mind it is worse for a man to violate his betrothal vows than his marriage ones. There are remedies for wives, but none for sweethearts. I think of that young lady, with her wedding gowns partly made, the congratulations of friends constantly arriving, the sweet dreams of maidenhood tinged with the foreshadowed future. To rob her of her bliss would be worse than murder. And if I were to accompany you to America, in your present state of mind, you would persist in your rash resolution to break that girl's heart, hoping that I should, after all, relent. It is only by separating yourself from me entirely, losing my address, having me vanish utterly from your knowledge, that you will find it possible to go to the altar in September, according to your solemn promise."

Kingdon was amazed at the openness of her declaration. She admitted her love for him as freely as if it were not outside of all conventionality.

"Forgive me if I inform you once more," said he, "that whether you leave me or not I will never—"

She shook her head, to show that he **must not** finish the sentence.

“If you said that a thousand times it would not change me.”

“Then I am to live a single life, always?” he said, interrogatively.

“No; you are to act the part of an honest man, and carry out your obligations.”

She was very intense. The strongest hope and belief that she would do as she said shone in her eyes.

“So help me Heaven!—” he began.

“Do not finish it!” she cried. “You can do few favors for me now, and I plead for this one.”

He had never seen any one so decided, and was puzzled what course to adopt.

“What else can I do for you?” he asked, desperately.

“I do not know yet,” she replied, hesitatingly. “I will try to tell you to-morrow.”

Then she asked him if he could take a walk with her, without alluding to any of the subjects they had been discussing. He promised, eagerly, and they strolled where everybody in Malta strolls—along the fortifications.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DANGERS OF LONDON.

There was nothing in the personal appearance of Miss Rivers to indicate the extremity of her fortunes. She wore the plain mourning which she had donned for her father. She remained at a good hotel. The story which she had told to Mr. Dale, of the letter from her English aunt, was unknown to any one else in Malta.

There was staying in the house an army officer and his wife, Col. and Mrs. Wainwright, and Margaret had held several talks with the lady. On the evening following her walk with Dale, she sought Mrs. Wainwright with a definite purpose in view. The Colonel's wife had been in London,—had passed much of her life in that city. She ought to be able to impart information of the kind that Margaret most needed.

She found Mrs. Wainwright alone, her husband having gone to the club, and at once spoke of the subject nearest her heart.

"I have just heard of a case in which I am much interested," began Margaret, "about which I want your advice. I have a young friend who has been left penniless by misfortune, and who is now in the Southern part of Europe, uncertain what move it is best to make. She has been advised to go to London and seek employment. She is fairly well educated, and has been reared like any other young lady of the middle class. She could teach children, or perhaps assist, if nothing else offered, in the care of a house. She has not a single acquaintance in the

city, but thinks her prospects there better than in a foreign country. It is a desperate case. With your knowledge of London, what do you advise me to write her?"

Mrs. Wainwright looked deeply interested.

"How old is your friend?" she asked.

"About my age."

"Is she good-looking?"

Margaret reddened slightly.

"Passably so," she replied, lowering her eyes.

"And unsophisticated, of course."

"She is unacquainted with the world, if that is what you mean. She has never had any responsibility outside of her own home."

The lady shook her head slowly.

"It is a sad thing to say, Miss Rivers, but the chances are all against the success of your friend. I mean to tell you the truth. If she were a farmer's daughter, with sturdy limbs and a capacity for hard work, she might get a place in a shop, a kitchen or a factory. If she were a graduated teacher there would be a possible chance in a school, though all of these lines are fearfully overcrowded. But being what you describe her, the encouragement is small, indeed. London is a great grist-mill. It grinds out both wheat and chaff. I am ashamed to say it, but the most probable result of your friend's going there without protection is starvation, or—a moral catastrophe."

Margaret looked up with frightened eyes.

"You mean—" she began.

"Exactly. The tragedy is repeated daily. The honest, well-meaning girl comes to London. At first she searches diligently for such a place as she would like to find. In a few days she lowers her ambition and only asks for any honest means of getting her bread. Her re-

sources grow slender and slenderer. Hunger begins to seize her. The rent of the poor room she has occupied becomes due. Some evening she is accosted upon the street by a man who has noticed her despondent air. He offers warmth to the cold body; food to the starving stomach. There is no alternative but death, from which the young spirit shrinks, even in its adversity. She goes with him, and from that hour her descent is rapid. I do not need to dwell upon it, but it makes me say to every such girl, 'Keep out of London.'"

Margaret shivered from crown to toe. She imagined herself already at the dire extremity mentioned, with the frightful alternative before her own eyes.

"Keep out of London." That was very well to say; but if out of London, where then? Was there any spot on earth where the poor girl of good parentage could find a living?

"I should say to such a girl," continued Mrs. Wainwright, kindly, "seek your relations, however humble they may be. Put up with a lowly home, make your lot with the poorest, but never go alone to London. Find a husband among the laborers or mechanics, forget that you were ever in a different rank, devote yourself to your family as it comes. But never, never, never go to London!"

Margaret knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that the lady had penetrated her secret, and felt that she was addressing the "friend" whose situation had been unveiled to her. The voice of Mrs. Wainwright was more than kind; it was sympathetic and deeply earnest.

"There surely must be a possibility of a better fate in that immense place," murmured Margaret, confusedly.

"Yes. There is a possibility that the purchaser of a lottery ticket will win the capital prize, but half a mil-

lion other investors only lose their money. Listen, Miss Rivers: I knew personally of a girl who went to London, and became, after many vicissitudes, the wife of a noble and honorable man. But hear through what she passed in the meantime. She tried as hard as any one ever tried to find work—at anything, she was not particular what.

“One day a finely dressed woman took her from an employment office to her palatial home. She was given a pleasant room at the top of the house, and fell asleep with a prayer of thankfulness on her lips that she had found at last the shelter and food she sought. An hour later she was awakened to discover that a man was in her chamber, and when she uttered a scream he told her that no sound could pass the walls. It was one of those traps of which so many abound in London, and she was as helpless as a fly in the spider’s web.”

The lady paused, breathing heavily, as if her story brought back a reminiscence she could hardly endure.

“And you knew this girl—you saw her afterward?” exclaimed the horrified listener.

“Ah, yes! I knew her, and still know her—well!” was the reply, delivered in a tone of the greatest intensity.

“And you say that, after this experience, she still found a husband?”

“Yes. After this and twenty more. For she was kept a slave in that house for long weeks. The bloom fled from her cheeks. She could not eat more than enough to keep life in her. Half her waking hours were passed in tears. She lived in constant dread of what each minute would bring forth.”

Margaret listened with fascination. The story was almost incredible to her young brain, but it bore the impress of truth, and she did not doubt it.

"How did she escape?" she asked, breathlessly.

"I will tell you. Among all the men that visited that house in two months there was just one who learned of this girl's situation into whose heart there came a manly impulse. He was an officer of Her Majesty, but that was not it; several of the girl's assistants had shown their uniforms in the room. He had come to the house to while away an evening, and the prize on the upper floor was offered him. He had no intention of taking advantage of her situation, but was resolved to save her from it if she proved the unwilling occupant of the house which she was represented.

"Paying the money, he was given the key of her chamber. When he entered she was sound asleep, so exhausted by her fears and trials that she did not hear him. Locking the door he knelt by the girl's side and gazed for a long time at her pale and wasted features."

The Colonel's wife could not control her voice as she came to this pathetic part of her story. Tears rolled down her cheeks, and Miss Rivers could not help weeping with her.

"When many minutes had passed," continued Mrs. Wainwright, when she could speak, "and the girl did not awaken"—the tears flowed faster—"he began to kiss her cheek, gently, reverently, pityingly.

"Her eyes opened, and she saw only one of the sex she had learned to fear and to hate. Springing up, she was about to renew her long-continued struggle in a hopeless cause, when she heard a soft voice bidding her have no alarm. Gaining confidence slowly, she told her sorrowful story to this man, on whose face she soon saw signs of the deepest indignation. He found, by further questions, that she had no friends in London, and, in-

deed, none on earth to whom she could with confidence appeal.

“‘Do you wish to leave here?’ he asked. ‘Oh, how earnestly!’ she answered. ‘If I will take you at once, will you go with me?’ said he. ‘Where?’ ‘To my apartments.’ The alternative was not agreeable, but escape from this fearful den was to be accepted at any cost.

“‘I have no clothes,’ she stammered. ‘I will wrap my topcoat around you,’ he said, ‘and take you in a carriage.’ ‘They will not let us go.’ ‘I will brain any one who tries to stop us.’ Afraid to depart, not willing to stay, she gave a trembling consent.”

There was now no question in Margaret’s mind that she was listening to a bit of autobiography. The excitement with which the lady related the history was too pronounced for any other hypothesis.

“The greatcoat was wrapped around the girl, who had the air of a winter’s night to face. Then the gentleman—am I not justified in calling him one?—rang the bell. A masculine servant who answered was pulled inside the room by a firm hand and ordered to do as he should be bidden under penalty of a sound drubbing.

“It was now three o’clock in the morning, and the house was still as death. Only the man who had answered the bell was on duty. To make resistance less likely, the officer gave the fellow five sovereigns, which he put in his pocket, promising implicit obedience.

“Taking the girl in his arms—she was no heavy burden for his strong frame—the gentleman followed the servant down the long stairs, the heavy carpets giving forth no sound. Reaching the door on the street level, he gave a last whisper of warning to the man, and passed hastily into the street. The snow was falling slowly.

Luckily a carriage happened to be passing, and he placed his burden inside. Giving a direction to the driver, he followed immediately, and the hateful residence where the girl had been incarcerated was speedily left behind."

The relief at this stage of the story was plainly shown in the face of the lady relating it. Again Margaret felt sure she was telling a tale of her own experience.

"But, the marriage?" she asked, for she could not forget this important matter. "How was it brought about?"

"I am coming to that," said Mrs. Wainwright. "Arriving at the gentleman's residence, the girl was carried directly to his rooms, which were handsomely furnished, besides being of a delicious warmth, refreshing after the cold night ride. The situation was most embarrassing. Now that the excitement of the escape was over, the girl began to feel the shame of her new position.

"But the hero of this story relieved the girl's mind at once. 'I shall have to leave you now,' he said, 'as there is not room enough for both of us here. Go to bed without fear—the key is on your side of the door—and sleep as well as you can till morning. When I arise, for I shall be in another part of the house, I will send you a maid, who will take your orders for breakfast. Later in the morning I will get a dressmaker to take a list of the clothing you need, and have the most important articles provided at once. When you are ready to see me I will call again, say at six this evening. After that your movements shall be for yourself to decide.'"

Miss Rivers hung on each word of the singular narrative.

"Before the girl could speak, the officer had taken his departure. The events on the following day were carried out as he had planned. At six o'clock he called, and

was received in a fitting costume, which had been hastily fashioned over from a ready-made stock. With all the politeness imaginable the gentleman asked if he might order a dinner for both sent up, and the request was granted. To each attempt on the girl's part to utter thanks, and they were many, he raised a silent but expressive dissent. He wished to find what desires she had for the future, and to continue to aid her in that direction so far as lay in his power.

"She timidly revealed her situation—homeless, friendless, but for him, hopeless without his aid. Besides, though she did not tell him in set phrases, she loved him—already. Yes, with all the fervor of her young heart! To be separated from him was like going to death. She could not think of any future in which he did not form a part. And yet how could she dream that he, the polished army officer, would see anything to attract him in the poor girl whose past two months had been filled with a succession of horrible events such as should arouse loathing in the breast of any decent person?"

All that had passed through the mind of the unfortunate woman was mirrored again upon her countenance.

"With a delicacy that cannot be described, the gentleman met the situation. He said to the girl that she could remain where she was until she could think of something more agreeable, and to her statement that she had nothing with which to repay the expense of her maintenance, he answered that this was a matter that need not trouble her in the least."

Miss Rivers shook with a slight attack of ague. She knew, as well as if the first person had been used in the recital, that Mrs. Wainwright was speaking of herself.

"At the end of a few weeks," continued the Colonel's wife, "he asked her hand in legal marriage. She gave it to him, and since that day there has been no happier wedded couple in the world.

"But this was a great exception to a terrible rule. Had he never seen her she would have been kept a few weeks longer in her prison room, and then, despairing of any other fate, would probably have accepted a place among the painted women who lived below without restraint, and gone to the end of the career thus opened.

"Go to London! Penniless, friendless! Tell your girl friend to go to the grave, rather!"

Col. Wainwright returned at this juncture, and Margaret made a closer inspection of him than she had hitherto done. The whole scene of his meeting with his wife came vividly before her mind's eye. She saw him stoop and kiss the face held up to him, with the courtly fashion that had been so well described.

A few minutes later she excused herself and went to her lonely room.

To London? No, she could not go to London. Where, then? It was a dreadful problem, and she fell asleep some hours later without solving it.

CHAPTER VII.

GORDON OCCUPIES HIS TIME.

Gordon Hayne was a rich young man. He had inherited a fortune from his grandfather that had grown rapidly in the hands of honest and astute trustees during his minority. In the eyes of the world he was a lucky young fellow, and one to whom fate had brought only good. But if it was very clear that he had no habits that would be called dissipated, it was equally certain that he devoted himself to no serious object. He did not drink to excess, nor gamble, nor squander his money in any manner; on the other hand, as has been intimated in the first chapter of this story, he had an attraction toward women that had coupled his name with a number of scandals occurring in and about Boston.

Mrs. Walden Bruce had heard rumors of these things, and had taken some pains to inquire about them; but had found no proof that Mr. Hayne was guilty in a single instance. No direct charge had been brought against him by any aggrieved woman or her friends. The principal thing said was, whenever there was a new instance of frailty to be discussed, "Isn't that the woman Gordon Hayne has been calling on so frequently?" Or, "You remember her; she was with Mr. Hayne in a box party at the Boston Theatre when Patti was last there."

Mrs. Bruce had known the Hayne family from her girlhood. She did not mean to put the seal of her disapproval on Gordon, with all that would imply, unless there was something tangible against him. So she con-

tinued to invite him to her receptions, and even to dine with herself and daughter at occasional intervals.

He was an attractive man to women, certainly. With his handsome face, his polished manner, and a certain boyish impetuosity for his twenty-four years, he was liked by all of his acquaintances. In the presence of Mrs. Bruce he was courtly, deferential, scrupulous. Never did he descend in the slightest degree to familiarity, although she did everything to make him feel fully at home. When Ida alone was in the room his manner changed a little, and became one of a sort of devotion, still well within the range of courteous propriety. There had long been that in his attitude which implied more than ordinary liking, and yet the sentiment that seemed to animate him had never been put into definite words. It was believed by most of those who knew him that he was not a marrying man; that his attentions to any member of the fair sex were not the prelude to an intended declaration of a desire to wed.

Gordon knew, for instance, of the popular supposition that Ida and Kingdon Dale were destined for each other, long before the date at which our story opened. He was a friend of both parties; he made no move to prevent the consummation of the plans concerning them. He went about with Kingdon, in the city and at his home, and believed in his heart that he was Mr. Dale's most esteemed masculine friend.

And yet, whenever Gordon was alone with Ida Bruce, there was something in his actions which said, as plainly as words, "I envy that fellow; I shall never know what it is to be perfectly happy again if you carry out this scheme of becoming his wife."

Gordon Hayne is a type that will be recognized by all who are familiar with the social life of this generation.

It is a type that does more harm, perhaps, than the out-and-out rone, whose reputation is undisputed, and who is yet admitted to the best society and has an opportunity unsurpassed to plant his dangerous seed.

On the evening of the reception at Mrs. Bruce's, to which allusion has been made, Mr. Hayne was in a state of mind into which he frequently worked himself. He was wildly jealous of his friend, Dale, on account of the pretty piece of femininity, with which the latter's name was constantly allied.

He regarded Ida from all corners of the rooms in which the reception was held. It seemed to him that she was a thousand times more lovely that night than he had ever imagined her. He marked the brightness of her eyes, the softness of her expression, the grace, the ineffable grace, of her pose. He followed with greedy eyes the outlines of her superb form, which the past few years had constantly rendered more and more alluring. He noticed with what discretion and taste she was garbed, no woman in the house approaching her in that respect, though many had ten times the cost of her clothing upon them.

Several times, overcome by his emotion, Mr. Hayne wandered to the side of the fair girl, and exchanged a word or two with her. The feeling that possessed him was made apparent to her quick mind in every tremor of his tones, in every lineament of his face. He loved her! It could make no difference in her life, for her husband had been selected from her cradle, but she felt deep sympathy for a man whose estimate of her charms was thus plainly portrayed.

She had had occasion before to feel a strange thrill at a stray word from his tongue, a random look in his countenance. It is in the nature of a young woman to like

admiration. Ida was too inexperienced to estimate this particular article at its true value. She did not know that while Gordon Hayne allowed himself the supreme luxury of his misery, he would not have married her then had the opportunity been presented to him.

No, he used often to say to himself, he was not going to be tied to any woman, however much he might like her. It was his dearest pleasure to make a woman feel that she had made an impression on his heart that would be indelible, and to know that he had made an answering one on hers.

He had a list of women who blamed themselves for inflicting ruin on his life—who said in their hearts, “Poor fellow! If I had used him better he would be a different man. He ought not to be blamed for anything he does, since it was his love for me that unbalanced him!”

There were married women, too, who used to dream of this pretty boy, perhaps at that moment tearing his hair, metaphorically, in rage at the happiness of his successful rival. Their hearts saddened as they thought of the cruelty they had shown to him, when, as a plain matter of fact, a steam-engine could never have drawn an offer of legal marriage to one of them.

But they felt what he wanted them to feel; and when he met them their regrets were accentuated by discreetly veiled allusions to the past, or glances arrested just when about to be shot into their bright eyes.

It was a favorite amusement of this man to visit the Bruces frequently after Kingdon Dale went abroad. He generally called first at the house of Mr. Dale, Sr., who was very glad to see him, as, indeed, he was almost any friend, in the lonesome condition in which his infirmities and his son’s absence left him. Sometimes Gordon

took lunch with that gentleman, and then strolled over to Mrs. Bruce's at three or four o'clock, remaining to dinner, as he was always importuned to do.

He had no regular occupation, and the usual business hours of men of his age put no hamper on his movements. Coming from Mr. Edward Dale's, the conversation between him and the widow reverted naturally to Kingdon, and in her presence there was no indication of the real reason that accounted for his call. He was known to be an intimate of young Mr. Dale, and one who had the pleasure of frequent letters from him.

The fact that the traveler wrote less frequently to his fiancée and that the letters received by her were much briefer than would have been expected was never divulged. Mrs. Bruce had settled it in her own mind that the marriage with her daughter was something that could not be set aside, and that time would bring the young couple into the harmonious relations that are supposed to, and sometimes do, follow that ceremony. She had counseled Ida to await the result with patience, and, being so completely under the influence of her mother, the girl was doing very well in this regard. But in the absence of her future lord, it was agreeable to have so often the society of one whose manners were delightful, whose conversation was pleasant, and whose admiration for herself was kept within the limits of decorum.

Gordon was so well known as the particular friend of her engaged lover that his presence in the house, or in the walks which they took together in the neighborhood, could not excite the faintest criticism in the breast of the most particular Grundy among her set.

Several times he came out in the evening, and brought Sidney Brooks with him. Gordon had divined that Miss Ida possessed more than usual interest for the young at-

torney. Brooks was such a very virtuous fellow, and so diffident in the presence of women, that it was a pleasure to watch him under these circumstances. The slightest direct question brought a color to his pale face that was worth seeing. Sidney's usual role was that of the silent listener, and when he was forced to take part in the conversation, with Ida as another participant in it, Hayne declared to himself many times that it was quite as good as a play to see him. One of these evenings Sidney found courage to speak of his own accord, and to announce that it was his intention to take a business trip to Europe the following week.

Now, to Gordon, Brooks was only a briefless barrister, who managed in some mysterious way to pay his office rent and to live in a desolate pair of rooms in an inexpensive part of the city. It therefore interested him uncommonly to learn that some person thought enough of his abilities to intrust a mission of this kind to his care. He pumped the facts out, discovering that a corporation of prominence was the principal in the affair, and that the matter related to a patent which was being interfered with by a German concern.

Mrs. Bruce, who had had a liking from the first for Brooks, expressed her congratulations in a charming way, remarking that he must feel highly pleased at being selected in a case which was plainly one requiring unusual tact, while Ida smiled the same sentiment without opening her pretty mouth.

"Oh, it's just because I happen to be a bit of a linguist, I guess," stammered Sidney. "It will be necessary to speak German, Italian and perhaps Spanish, and our leading lawyers are seldom equipped with those qualifications."

"But where the dickens did you learn those lan-

guages?" asked Hayne, with undisguised frankness. "I never knew that you could do anything of the kind."

"Why, I spent two years in Buenos Ayres," was the reply, "and it is almost impossible to live there without acquiring Spanish and Italian. The German I picked up largely by myself, together with French."

"We never shall know," laughed Gordon, addressing the ladies, "the full extent of this man's erudition. I am constantly being surprised at something about him. I don't think he can have much to learn. But a fellow who hides in his rooms or his office and sticks to his books must acquire an awful lot of wisdom in time."

There was a quiet ripple around the party at this sally, and then Mrs. Bruce remarked that it was possible Mr. Brooks might meet Mr. Dale while away.

"I hardly think it likely, but I should be glad to hope so," said Brooks. "If I happen to get anywhere in his vicinity I shall certainly go out of my way to meet him."

The talk here wandered to the road that Kingdon had taken and the possible routes by which he would return. Hayne, it was clear to Sidney, knew more of these things than did either of the ladies, and he drew some conclusions from this fact. He drew more yet from his observation of the standing which Hayne had in the household, but not being able to grasp the character of his friend fully—his knowledge of social life being limited—he understood the situation imperfectly.

If Brooks had definitely diagnosed the case as it lay in his mind, he might have concluded that Gordon had offered his hand to Ida at some time in the past and been refused; or that he would have done so but for the knowledge that this would be the result. As to the conduct of Mr. Dale, there was a mystery that he could not fathom, and which he waited patiently for the future to

reveal. Not that he was inquisitive about it, but it interested his mind, naturally given to weighing evidence. And, besides, in an honorable, high-minded way that belonged to his nature, he was much interested in Ida Bruce.

Once or twice he found himself alone with her, and, although he had a fear, of the species called "stage fright," he kept the knowledge of his alarm from her entirely. She could not have comprehended how any man in the world could hold her in awe. Mr. Brooks was somewhat older than she, and much wiser. He was a little odd, to be sure, and perhaps not much accustomed to the society of women; but beyond this no special impression was made on her mind.

As to Gordon Hayne, Ida thought of him a great deal. He managed to make her believe him unhappy, and to blame herself in an indefinite way as being the cause. He also enlisted her sympathies by vague allusions to the absent lover, and expressions of dumb wonder that any man who had the happiness to hold her promise of marriage could let a mere business reason tear him from her side.

Gordon did not say this in so many words. It was not his method. He only let her know that he felt it—that it gave him pain—that it passed his comprehension.

And she thought him very kind, and that his repression of what was blighting his life evinced the most remarkable fealty to his absent friend.

Ida might have learned to love Mr. Hayne—in which case, had marriage been the question, he would certainly have found means to terminate the acquaintance—but that she was a good girl, who implicitly obeyed her mother. Mrs. Bruce had settled upon the man her daughter was to wed, and the idea of departing from

the programme never occurred to the younger woman. It was rather dull waiting for Kingdon, it might be duller yet when she had achieved him; but her path was plainly marked out for her.

CHAPTER VIII.

"KISS ME, KINGDON!"

Knowing nothing of what was passing in the mind of Margaret Rivers, Kingdon Dale went to his sleepless bed that night, and tossed restlessly for hours. He felt the time drawing near when he must either bid a final adieu to the girl he had come to love so dearly, or secure her company a little longer by a subterfuge or direct deceit. A day or two was the limit of their close acquaintance unless he could arrange some plan to retain her.

The next morning Margaret surprised him by saying that she had concluded not to go to England. He stared at her stupidly, for he knew no other course open, unless she was to accept his proposal to visit America; but he said nothing, for in her statement he saw a gleam of light along his own path.

Where was she going, then? he asked her. And she replied, as calmly as she could, that she was going to Gibraltar, where she knew several people, with whom she intended to make a short stay.

"But after that?" he asked, with clouded brow. "You will not stay forever at Gibraltar. Oh, Margaret! if you would only do the wisest thing, and go to America with me!"

She regarded him with piercing eyes, and his gaze fell before their fires. The wisest thing? Could he honestly maintain that it was the wisest thing for her to take that long journey with a chance acquaintance met on

shipboard—with all the risks that it implied? Still, on the other hand, what could she do if she remained in Europe? He tried to argue to himself that the one course was at least as likely to benefit her as the other.

“I will go with you as far as Gibraltar,” she said, gently. “I will see my friends there; and then—we will talk about the rest.”

It was at least something. He was not to lose her quite as soon as he had feared. There would be a few more days for them to be together, and, perhaps—who could say?—she might change her mind. The spirits of the young man rose perceptibly. Margaret was going to take another journey with him—under his protection. She would leave her past life there in Malta, and begin an essentially new one on the steamer that sailed toward the west. There would be several days in which they would be alone together, and in that time he could bring all his influence to bear. He accepted her decision with joy, and, as there was no longer occasion for delay, he went at once to the steamship office and bought two tickets for Gibraltar.

When he returned, and she took out her slender purse to repay him, he said she had best wait until they were on board, jokingly remarking that there were other little bills he would have to settle for her, like the conveyance of herself and her boxes to the boat. He wanted to say something to brighten her cheek a little, and, indeed, his own. The gayety of his spirits was tempered by the nearness of the time when he would have to set his face toward the setting sun, and breast the waves of the Atlantic alone once more.

Among their acquaintances at the hotel, Mrs. Wainwright was one of the kindest in her expressions when they came to say good-bye. She drew Margaret aside

and again warned her against letting her "friend" go unprotected to London, seeming much pleased when the girl replied that she should advise her not to go there under any circumstances. She asked questions about Mr. Dale, with a roguish look, intimating that the liking between the young people was stronger than that of ordinary fellow-travelers. And, although Miss Rivers shook her head decidedly, the Colonel's wife murmured, "A husband like that is what an orphan girl like you needs most. Don't be foolish, my dear child, or too backward, if such an opportunity comes your way."

With her head full of matrimonial ideas, she also found time to say to Kingdon, "What a lovely little lady Miss Rivers is! I congratulate you on making this short voyage with her. Were I a man and single I would make it a much longer one, if I could."

He wished for the moment that they had another week at Malta, for he might have told his story to Mrs. Wainwright, and enlisted her efforts in his behalf; but the steamer was about to sail, and everything had been sent on board. He entered the carriage with his companion, and they were driven down the steep street to the water-side. An hour later the steamer was headed for the southernmost point in Spain, and he had Margaret entirely to himself.

The three days between the two great naval stations of the British Empire in the Mediterranean were passed in the quietest manner by the young couple. Nothing in the way of further entreaty that Margaret should accompany him to the United States passed Kingdon's lips. They said remarkably little to each other, in fact, although they were hardly separated during the voyage, except in their sleeping hours.

But one thought was in both their minds—they

dreaded separation, and wished there was some feasible way to prevent it.

Margaret thought also, frequently, of the tale the Colonel's wife had told about the girl who went to London. She did not dwell so much on the experiences of the month or two when she was held a prisoner, but on the night when her handsome cavalier came to her rescue. She saw the officer, in her mind's eye, kneeling by the bedside, kissing the tearstained cheek so gently that he did not disturb the slumbers of the tired girl. She saw her wrapped in his greatcoat, folded in his arms and carried shoeless and stockingless out into the wintry night.

There was something fascinating in the story to the daughter of Captain Rivers. If all men were like Colonel Wainwright! she thought.

Marriage was never as interesting as untrammelled love, certainly not in novels, of which Margaret had read many. Nobody cared to tell of the days spent in the harbor after an exciting voyage had finished. There were the risks of the sea, of course, the danger of the waves and storms, while the harbor, landlocked and calm, brought safety to every passenger. But the freedom, the exhilaration, the excitement—these belonged to the open ocean!

Mr. Dale had not heard the story that proved so interesting to his fair companion, but he was trying to weave one of his own, with her as the central figure. He did not know very well how to do it. He realized that each revolution of the ship's propeller carried them nearer the shore where, according to their present plans, they must separate. What would be the future of each of them when leagues of salt water rolled between? For her it

could not be very bright; for him the outlook was exceedingly dismal.

"I wish you would let me talk about myself a little," he broke out, on the last evening before they reached Gibraltar.

"About yourself?" she repeated.

"Yes. About my unhappy engagement, which I have determined, whatever you may do, to break."

She let him finish the sentence, and when he paused for an answer she did not speak.

"It is cruel to treat me as you are doing, Margaret," he protested. "You have taught me to love you, and yet you intend to drive me to a marriage I had regarded with dread even before we met. I am thoroughly in earnest in what I say. If I never see you again after I leave Gibraltar, if I never hear whether you are dead or living, I will not marry Ida Bruce! I think it would be a crime."

Again he was not interrupted, much to his surprise. He had hurried in his speech, thinking that she would refuse to let him finish.

"Your father?" she said, simply.

"There is a limit to filial obligations," he replied. "If my father bade me put my arm in the fire, or swallow a deadly poison, would it be my duty to obey? I have rebelled against this plan of his for years, and now I simply cannot carry it out. I love you, Margaret, and you alone. Without you life will be barren and bitter. I will not make it unbearable by marrying another whom I actually dislike."

There was a pause, during which Miss Rivers' gaze was fixed on a point far out at sea.

"Inclination and duty frequently conflict in this world," said Margaret, at last. "Is it not possible that

in thinking of this matter you overestimate your dislike to Miss Bruce? Possibly, thrown together as closely as we have been, you also overestimate your fondness for me. And, between these two, it is more than probable that you think too lightly of your duty to your father. Besides this, there is your fiancée to consider. Her engagement to you is announced. Her wedding clothes—the sweet voice began to tremble—“are being made. Can you comprehend the blow to her if you violate your promise now?”

He was plunged into the deepest gloom by her expressions. All of these things had passed through his mind more than once; but arranged in order and by her they had new and more terrible meanings.

“It only presents itself to me in this light,” he said: “Should one completely ruin his life because he has made a rash and foolish promise?”

“If the breaking of that promise ruins the lives of others—yes,” she replied, gravely.

“Oh, it is well enough to say that, and it sounds very noble,” answered Dale, “but one has to be in this position before he realizes what it means.”

She put a hand frankly into his and turned her eyes full upon him.

“I know what it is, and I am doing precisely what I ask you to do,” she said. “My life is ruined if you go out of it. Yet I say to you, be true to your plighted word, though it breaks my heart and yours.”

He took her hand and clasped it close in his own. It was dark and no one was near them on the deck. There was a deliciousness about the contact that he could not resist.

“There is one other chance,” he whispered. “What if I went to her and told her that I did not love her—

that I knew we should never be happy together? If she released me then, would you still refuse me?"

In the long pause that followed he could hear the splashing of the waters about the steamer's sides and the rustle of the sails overhead.

"She never would release you!" cried Margaret, with a gasp. "No woman who had your promise to wed her *could* give you up!"

It was ecstasy mixed with pain to hear her talk thus.

"If you were in her place, and knew I never should love you, would you not let me go?" he asked.

"Not for worlds present and to come!" she answered, fervently.

He trembled before her earnest avowal.

"Think it all over," he continued. "A husband who felt aversion for you, who adored another—"

"But he would be mine!" she interrupted. "No, I am sure I would not surrender you, and I believe, as time passed on, I should be able to make you forget the absent one."

"Ah," he cried, "you do not know me!"

"I am afraid," she smiled, sadly, "you do not know yourself."

It was hopeless to alter her decision, but he breathed a blessing on her head when she put his hand to her lips at parting for the night, and kissed it warmly.

The next day they would be at Gibraltar, and perhaps before another night his steamer for the west would bear him away from her. That kiss on his hand was the sweetest memory he could take with him.

At daylight they sailed into the harbor, and Mr. Dale found Margaret already dressed and on the deck when he went up to view the fortress and the town. Hotel people

who came on board told him the boat in which he expected to leave the place had not yet arrived, and was not expected till the day following. He thought Margaret seemed as pleased as he when he brought her this news, and he wished with all his heart that she was not so stubborn in her ideas. It was arranged that they should go together to the Royal Hotel and take breakfast, after which she would make inquiries for the friends of whom she had spoken.

"One suite, I presume," said the hotel clerk to Dale, as the couple stood together at his counter.

"No, two," said Kingdon, reddening.

"I beg your pardon," was the reply, as the natural mistake was corrected. He had supposed them married.

"Have them near together, if possible," said Miss Rivers.

Her companion started with astonishment at the suggestion.

"Certainly. Connected, if you like," said the affable clerk, who now thought he had hit upon the right relation of the parties. They were, of course, brother and sister.

"That will be best," came from the girl's lips, and a second shock thrilled the young man's nerves.

"Twenty-seven, twenty-eight," was the direction given to the bellboy, and the couple were shown to some pleasant rooms on the second floor.

Ashamed of the thoughts that followed this simple conversation, Dale drew himself together, and began to discuss the usual things which interest travelers in a town new to both of them. From the windows of his parlor they could see the street, the harbor, the ships at anchor and in motion. From hers, as they soon found, the frowning walls of the great rock were visible. He

wandered with her through the two suites with a freedom that she seemed to encourage, talking of the strength of the fort, the size of its armament, the value it was to England, and the manner in which that nation obtained possession of it. Soon, however, a lad came up to say that breakfast was served, and they went down together and partook of chops and coffee, like two sworn companions who had no differences.

"I will ask at the office for the address of your friends here, if you will give me their names," said Dale, when they had once more reached their rooms. "And, much as it is against my desire, I will go with you when you seek them out."

He had found a new courage, and he wanted to avail himself of it while it lasted.

But, to his surprise, Miss Rivers responded that she was in no haste; that later in the day would do quite as well; and that she had rather sit there in his parlor with him and inspect the sights outside. Not displeased, he took a seat by her on a sofa which she had turned to command the view, and discussed it with her in low tones. Imperceptibly his arm stole around her form, and when he attempted a half apology, saying that it might be the last day they would ever be together, Margaret seemed not to hear him or to notice what he was doing. She talked rapidly, and moved closer until there was no more room to annihilate.

"That is a French ship," he was saying. "Do you not see the tricolor? And that is a Russian—see the enormous guns she carries. And that—"

A head lay on his shoulder, and an arm drew his face downward.

"What do we care for ships?" said a petulant voice. "What are their flags or their guns to us? Kingdon, kiss me!"

CHAPTER IX.

TWO ROOMS CONNECTING.

The day passed away and the evening came; and still Margaret said nothing about the friends she had desired to see. At noon, when a callboy knocked, to ask what they would have for lunch, they looked surprised. They did not want anything. It was quite too soon to think of food, after their late breakfast. Why, the idea was absurd! In a moment more they had forgotten the disturbance, and it was only when the shades of night reminded them of the waning day that the thought of dinner entered their minds.

To both of them the day had been the most perfect one of their lives. Wrapt in thought and conversation, lost in each other, no dark forebodings harassed their minds. Kingdon had for once laid his worries about Ida Bruce completely aside. Margaret had put far from her the black page in her life that yesterday had seemed so near.

For him, during those moments, there was no father to chide, no fiancée to gratify. For her there was no past, no future, nothing but the delicious present. It was the fullness of love, pure and sweet, between persons of youth and health and intelligence.

It had not the delirium of passion, but possessed the indefinable charm of undisturbed serenity.

When the sun had sunk so low that they could not see each other's faces, Margaret was the one to suggest that the lamps be lighted. He responded softly that he

would see to them presently, for he dreaded being, even for so brief a period, from her side. He could not think of anything terrestrial. The dream in which he indulged was so beautiful he could have wished it to last forever. But the callboy broke in upon them for the second time, with his knock on the door, thinking, doubtless, that the interests of the hotel demanded that people should give him a dinner order, when they had not had a mouthful to eat during the day. And the happy lovers laughed gayly as they reflected that a diet of kisses alone cannot sustain life beyond a certain space of time.

"Eat! Yes, I suppose we must," said Kingdon, when he had sent the boy away, with directions to return in ten minutes. "It seems ridiculous, though. I never was less hungry. Look over this bill of fare, my dear, and tell me what you will have."

Miss Rivers did not know what she would have. She said, with him, that she had not a particle of appetite, that it would be quite the same to her if dinners had never been invented. She looked over the items on the list, and ended by declaring that one thing would suit as well as another.

"Get anything you please," she said. "I will try to help you eat it."

He decided on the articles, announcing them aloud to her, and she smilingly said they would never be able to eat half of them. Then he wanted to know whether she would dine in the general room, or have the meal sent up to his parlor.

Suddenly her face paled. The story of the Colonel's wife, that had lain dormant for hours, came back to her. The girl kidnapped in London had taken dinner in her lover's rooms the night of her rescue. What might hap-

pen to her after this man sailed was something Margaret could only think of with dread. While he remained she would have him near her, at any cost.

"Have it sent up here," she stammered; and while he was giving the order she wiped a few tears from her eyes that came there in spite of her.

It was nearly an hour before the meal arrived, but they thought it less than a quarter of that time. The waiter spread it appetizingly on a centre table, and they began to eat and talk, as if no one but themselves were there, finding, to their surprise, that they were rather hungry, after all. During the absences of the attendant, Kingdon allowed his hands to stray across the table and envelope those of his companion. He was still in a daze, as far as the outer world was concerned, and she was in nearly the same condition.

What was most astonishing was the amount they were eating. From the first course to the last they did full justice to the viands.

There were wines, too, with the various courses, and they were not neglected. When the waiter had gone for the last time, Kingdon took up one of the cigars he had brought, bit off the end, and was about to light it, when he threw the match aside, exclaiming, "How careless of me. I had forgotten you!"

She laughed at the idea, declaring that she liked tobacco smoke, and that she would be best pleased if he would go on. When he demurred, she lit a match herself and put it to the weed, breathing in the fumes he soon emitted, as if they were ambrosia.

"Could this only last forever!" whispered the trembling mouth between his salutes.

"It can!" he cried. "It shall! Forever? Yes, and a million years after!"

Her thought had stirred in him for the moment the memories of the past, but he refused to let them blight his happiness. He had never been so near heaven. He had never dreamed that such bliss as this was vouchsafed to mortals.

The hours passed. At last, still the one to think, she asked him what time it was.

"I do not know," he cried, gayly. "And I do not care."

"I am afraid," she said, softly, "it is time to separate."

"And I am sure," he answered, "that it is time to remain together."

She sat still for a few minutes, and then she spoke again.

"Oh, Kingdon! What if they were to come before morning and say your steamer had arrived?"

He laughed aloud.

"I should tell them to let it go on again."

"Without you?"

"You may be sure."

"But there is not another for two weeks," she said, her voice trembling.

"I would not care if there were none for two years," he answered.

She did not mean to let him neglect his duty, at whatever cost to herself, but she thrilled with delight to hear him speak thus. It added another joy to his stay with her, though it might give another pang to the hour of parting.

"You know," she said, with a gasp, "what must be the end of all this?"

"There will be no end," he answered, smiling.

"Oh, yes!" she said. "There will be an end, and

very quickly, too. We have gone too far already. When your steamer comes you must join it. To do otherwise is to pursue a course you would regret all your life."

"It has not come," he laughed, "and we need not talk about it till it does. Why should we waste these precious moments in forebodings? Margaret, tell me once more that you love me!"

Did she need to tell him that? she murmured. Could he doubt it, when he remembered where he was?

"And yet you mean to send me from you, some time within a day or two, at most, and never see me again?"

She cried out in pain at the blunt statement, but she nodded assent.

"Well," said he, "I love you, too, and I refuse to go without you. If I take that steamer, you will take it with me. Since you are so anxious I should not neglect my duty, I leave it to you to make me fulfill it."

Each sentence was punctuated with kisses, and his mood was joyous. He refused to think of any parting from her.

"What are you going to do?" he added. "Have you discovered some new way to make your fortune? Let me see how rich you are." He took her purse from the mantel, where, after the manner of women, she had laid it. "Bah!" he cried, sweeping the odd sovereigns and shillings into his pocket, "you haven't a penny. You are a beggar. In a week after I leave you will be dying of starvation."

He meant all this in a spirit of jocularly, but the words had a terrible meaning to Margaret Rivers. The small sum she possessed would have lasted her but a few weeks at most, and then what had she to expect but starvation, or—

Rising before her mind was always the story of the

Colonel's wife, the fate that lay open to a friendless girl with physical attractions. It might not be the horrors of an imprisoned room, but it must be the giving of one's self in exchange for the means to sustain existence.

"Please put my money back," she said, entreatingly. "Put it back, and let me settle with you now for the ticket you bought in Malta and the hotel charges here."

He laughed so loudly that she feared he would attract attention from other persons in the house.

"You are a bankrupt," he answered. "You are unable to settle your debts," (he spread open the empty purse) "and must be sold under the hammer. I shall not admit other bidders—I know too much for that—I am going to have you at my own price. How much shall I offer?" He placed one foot in a chair, and, taking up the empty purse, assumed the attitude of an auctioneer. "Well, I will start it at my life, my love, my hand in marriage, my true devotion as long as I live."

At the close, Kingdon seemed impressed by the significance of the words he had uttered so lightly. He threw himself on his knees before the girl and covered her hands with kisses.

"Ah, Margaret," he cried, "how can you let me keep up this farce? To leave you is to go to everlasting misery! To bear you with me, as my promised wife, is to open the gates of paradise. I must save you from your own rashness. I must refuse to let you perpetrate your folly. Let us end this suspense here and now. Tell me you will be mine!"

The lightning-like change in his manner, as well as the impetuosity of his expressions affected Miss Rivers powerfully, but she would not surrender.

"If you speak like this, there is but one course open

to me," she replied, tearfully. "I must bid you good-night—and good-bye."

He rose moodily to his feet, as erect and almost as pale as a statue of marble.

"Very well!" he said, huskily. "If it is to be, let it be now. If you are resolved to doom me to lifelong torment, I may as well understand it to-night as later. There is no new argument that I can offer."

Taking a handful of money from his pocket, much more, he was sure, than he had abstracted from her purse, he stuffed it into that receptacle, and went to the other side of the room. He seemed to be waiting for her to vacate the apartment.

"Good-bye, my—my friend," she whispered, when five minutes had passed and he did not stir.

"Good-bye," he replied, shortly, without turning his head.

"Won't you shake hands with me?" she whispered, after another long pause.

"No!" he exclaimed, turning fiercely toward her. Then he melted a little at sight of the pathetic figure, and added: "I can't, Margaret; don't you see I can't? I must compose myself or I shall go mad! Unless—unless," he said it entreatingly, "you will change your mind."

It was the girl who turned this time, more to hide the gush of salt drops to her eyes than for any other reason. A moment later she had taken the few things belonging to her and left the room, through the door that connected her apartment with his.

Mr. Dale drew a long breath, and sank wearily into a chair. He pulled out a cigar and began to fill the room with smoke. Finding that this did not steady his nerves, he got a strong glass of liquor from a bottle that

the servant had left and drank it. Ten minutes later he rang and asked the callboy to find out whether anything had yet been heard of the American steamer. While the lad was gone he busied himself with his baggage, tossing things into the trunk and bags recklessly. This done, he took paper and pen and wrote the name of Miss Rivers on an envelope, into which he put fifty pounds of English money, with this line: "Take it. You will need it some time."

The boy returned with the statement that no news of the steamer had been received. She could not now enter and leave port till some time on the following morning. The gentleman could sleep undisturbed, with the assurance that he would be called at any hour he might name.

"Sleep!"

Much sleep he was likely to get, in his state of mind! He told the boy that he did not need to be called. He wished heartily that the boat had been in the harbor, and that he could have gone on board of her. It was simply unbearable in that hotel, with the cause of all his woes separated from him only by a brick partition wall.

"Damn it!" he ejaculated, many times. The words seemed to partially relieve the tension on his mind. He did not dare think consecutively of her. Still less did he wish to think of home and what awaited him there. What a long night it promised to be! He looked at his watch and wound it, from the force of habit.

It was only half-past ten.

He walked up and down his room, in and out of the bed-chamber beyond. Oh, how long, how very long the night was! He scanned the face of his watch again.

It was now a quarter before eleven. He lay down and tried to sleep.

He lay there for hours, for days, for weeks, and then, in desperation, he looked at his watch again, to see what new lie was mirrored on its face.

Half-past eleven! What an absurdity!

A century passed after that, during which he tossed and turned, more sleepless, if possible, than before. Then a clock somewhere began striking and tolled twelve strokes.

Sitting up, Dale began to curse the timepiece that could utter such a senseless falsehood. He forgot the silence of the place and the distinctness with which his voice resounded in the empty rooms. When he stopped, he fancied he heard a new and strange sound, like the movement of soft feet on the carpet in the parlor. Pshaw! His brain was turned, he could not trust his senses.

Across the open doorway, faintly shown by the lowered light, stole a slight figure—a human shape, and it came toward him.

CHAPTER X.

MR. AND MRS. TAYLOR.

It was late the next morning when Kingdon Dale arose. He had lain for more than an hour after waking, harassed by the most horrible reflections and fears. He was far from being at heart a bad man. Could it have availed to blot out the occurrences of the previous twelve hours he would have sacrificed every hope of success that had filled his brain. With languid steps and pale features, he dragged himself about the room like a man partially paralyzed.

When Miss Rivers returned to him, long after, he stole a glance at her face, to see if there was left a single gleam of pity for one who had wronged her so deeply. To his surprise, he noticed nothing that indicated hate, although her manner was much more subdued than formerly. Overcome by his emotions, he took a step toward her and fell upon his knees at her feet.

With the sweetest words of comfort, Margaret chided him for his prostrate position, and succeeded at last in persuading him to arise and talk with her. But when he pleaded his love in extenuation of his conduct, and promised to take her hand in marriage as soon as a clergyman could be found, she proved as obdurate as ever.

"No man in his senses," she said, "would talk of making a wife of a woman disgraced as I am. Your excitement has turned your brain."

"Don't talk like that unless you intend to make me really insane," he groaned.

She shook her head sorrowfully.

"I don't know what to say to you," she ejaculated, "and I wish you would forget this disagreeable subject. There are some hours yet left to us before your steamer will sail. Must we spend it all in talking of matters about which we differ? Why cannot we be good friends and part without a quarrel?"

He demanded to know why she thought he could ever quarrel with her, why he should ever be anything but her dear, close friend. He repeated, in spite of her entreaties, that there was no reason in the world but her stubbornness why she should not let him call her by the name of wife before the day ended. His love for her had grown ten times greater since they came to Gibraltar. He would not leave her; he would give up the business of his firm; he would remain in Europe; unless she consented to go to America with him.

"Why," he cried, in conclusion, "you are already my wife! The ceremony prescribed by the law can hardly cement us closer than we are. I will listen to no evasions of your duty, Margaret. This is a matter in which I have a right to insist."

"How wildly and recklessly unbridled passion will make a man talk," she said. "Your 'wife,' indeed! If I had promised you my hand, and the hour of our wedding was fixed for to-day, I would refuse to keep my promise after what has occurred. Unless I could become a wife with the respect of my husband, I never would marry."

"Oh, Margaret," he cried, "what is it you mean to do? You have confided to me your situation. You are friendless, penniless, innocent of the ways of the world. If I leave you here you will fall a victim to some miserable scamp and live a life you despise with a man you hate!"

She shivered, and he drew her closer to his breast, as if to warm her.

"I realize the truth of the picture you have drawn," said she, after kissing him once more to gain strength. "I have known it for some days—the hopelessness of expecting to make a living at any respectable employment. But, Kingdon, the men who are to share my smiles will not hold my heart in their grasp, as you do. I shall not feel that fierce hunger with which you possess me—that jealousy of every other female creature in the universe."

Dale heard her with the utmost impatience.

"I wish you could feel, for one second," he said, "the torture you cause me. It is simply maddening. I cannot give you up now, whatever I could have done before. Make your own terms with me, Margaret. Give me any obligation you like, only don't say we are never to meet after that dreadful steamer arrives. I should throw myself from its deck into the ocean if I knew you were consigned to the awful life of which you spoke a little while ago. I will not leave you here! I say that once for all. You shall go to America or I shall remain in Europe. If there be no place where you can earn a living here, there are certainly plenty on the other side of the sea. You have no right to refuse my offer to obtain one for you there—an honest opportunity to get your bread. If you refuse that you are beyond reason."

Miss Rivers saw that her companion was being wrought into a state of uncontrollability, and she tried to soothe him.

"What I fear is that your resolution to leave me when we reach land will not be so easy to keep. There will be

the same trouble over again—the talk of marriage and that sort of thing,”

“No,” he said, eagerly, “I will let all that go. I will give up all hope of marrying you, and certainly I shall never think of marrying any other woman. There! It is settled, then; there is no more to be said. You will go to New York with me; I will put you in good hands and,” he said the last words with a choking voice, “we will part forever.”

He could not hold back the tears, and, seeing him weeping, she mingled hers with those that coursed down his cheek.

“I had forgotten that you wished to see friends here,” he said, presently. “We shall have to attend to that this morning, or it may be too late.”

“I do not want to see them if I am going with you,” she answered, tremulously. “Oh, I wonder if I had better go! The temptation to escape my certain fate here is great, but there must be no break in your promise. Make it again, Kingdon, solemnly.”

He repeated it after her, slowly, and sealed it with a kiss on her lips.

“I—I will go,” she said, after a moment’s pause. “Yes, I will go. And now I must return to my room and get ready, for it must be nearly noon.”

“A minute,” he said, as she was about to leave him. “You know I have done you a fearful wrong, and you know I am very sorry. It will do me much good to hear you say you forgive me!”

“I will say it and welcome,” she replied. “It was all my fault. I believed you would leave with less regret whe you learned that I was not the kind of woman you wanted for your wife.”

He shook his head as if he did not yet understand.

"I thought," she stammered,—“I wanted you to go away with an easier heart.”

He drew her closer to him again.

“You poor little innocent,” he exclaimed, “in what school did you learn these strange ideas?”

A few minutes later a callboy was knocking. The American steamer had arrived, and would leave in about two hours.

Margaret opened her door, when he hastened to impart the news.

“The steamer is here—our steamer!” he said. “We are going in two hours—together!”

“Hush!” she replied, when she had disengaged herself from his embrace. “If you act like this I shall not dare go with you.”

“I want to say one thing,” he whispered, “and you will understand at once. In order that we may be as much together as we please, I shall register you on the passenger list as my wife.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, but he stopped her.

“It is not an official document. I only want to stop the tongues of the other passengers. We shall have nothing to do with them. It is merely for expediency.

There was another knock at his door, and he went back to talk with a porter, who wanted to know when the baggage would be ready. He sent down for his bill, and paid everything for both. It was a good thing there was so much to do, for he was afraid every minute that Miss Rivers would raise some new objection if she had time to talk with him alone. Presently they were in the carriage and speeding toward the pier.

“What names?” asked the agent, when Dale asked for two tickets.

“Mr. and Mrs. Taylor,” he replied.

“Christian names?”

“Albert and—Lydia.”

Once on board, Margaret went directly to her state-room, where she elected to remain for the present, pleading a slight indisposition. With a tender caress Kingdon bade her try to sleep, saying he would not disturb her for an hour or two. As he regained the deck he saw coming toward him a familiar form, and Sidney Brooks held out his hand, exclaiming, “Well, Kingdon Dale!”

“You are mistaken,” was the icy reply. “My name is Taylor.”

CHAPTER XI.

"COME AND LET US TALK."

The astonishment of Mr. Brooks at this reception of his advances was marked. He knew that the person he had addressed was Mr. Dale, and he could not account for the direct cut he had received, or the pretense that he was mistaken. For some moments he stood staring after the form of the other, as it moved toward the farther end of the deck, wondering over the strange occurrence. Suddenly he saw it whirl about and come toward him quite as rapidly as it had gone away.

"Come over here and let us have a talk," said Kingdon, in a more affable tone.

Brooks followed willingly, for he bore no ill-will on account of the treatment he had just received. When they had reached a quiet spot where there were no ears to overhear their conversation, Dale remarked, "I was not looking for any one I knew, and I have reasons for not wishing to be addressed here by my true name. That is why I answered you so abruptly. But, as you are apparently going to be my fellow-voyager for the next ten days, you might as well understand it now as later."

"If you have any secret that you do not wish me to learn, I hope you will not think it necessary to reveal it," responded Brooks. "I would not have addressed you had I suspected that to be the case, and I will profess not to know you during the voyage if you desire."

"There is nothing to be gained by that course," said Dale, after reflection. "I have committed what most

people would call an indiscretion, and it is too late to undo it. If I had expected to meet any person who knew me on the boat I should have taken a different method. All I need explain to you is that I have bought my ticket under the name of Albert Taylor, and that a lady who come with me is registered as Lydia Taylor."

He spoke as if the matter was a very ordinary one, for he did not mean to have his tones excite more interest than the words they uttered. But Brooks could not help a slight start, and a change of color.

"There! It is out now," added Kingdon. "You could make it very unpleasant for me if you chose; but I think I read your mind better than to suppose you would do so. I am involved in one of those affairs which explanations only complicate. The least said in the matter will be soonest mended."

Mr. Brooks bowed, and said he should do nothing to add to his friend's uneasiness. He had no wish to learn anything on the subject. He colored as he made the statement, very much as a girl might have done with the same suspicions in mind, but Kingdon felt certain of his fealty to his word, and breathed easier.

The conversation then changed to Mr. Brooks' visit to Europe, and to the legitimate business of Mr. Dale on his foreign trip. It seemed that Sidney had been commissioned to take some depositions at Naples, and had taken the opportunity to see a little of Southern Italy, but his time had been extremely limited, and he was going home still hungry for the sights he had missed. He listened to Kingdon's account of his own voyages, asking many questions and showing interest in all he heard.

On learning that it was only five weeks since Brooks had left Boston, Mr. Dale inquired about his friends

there. The young lawyer gave an account of many of them, among others Gordon Hayne. He also mentioned incidentally that he had gone with Hayne once or twice to Mrs. Bruce's, and had also seen Mr. Dale the elder.

"How did he appear?" queried the son, anxiously.

"Much as the last time I had seen him—the time you were there," said Brooks. "I had quite a talk with him, mainly, as was natural, about you. I did not then know that I was going abroad—I started very suddenly—but I think at that time he expected you home a little earlier than this."

Kingdon explained that he had done more business than he at first expected, and then he inquired about the Bruces.

"Mrs. Bruce looked the picture of health," responded Sidney, "and Miss Ida, though not as ruddy as her mother, was as ever very beautiful. By the way," he added, as if not quite sure that he ought to mention it, "I saw the announcement of your engagement just before you sailed."

To this statement Dale vouchsafed no reply. He was picturing the scene to himself—the parlors of Mrs. Bruce, the familiar faces that he knew must have gathered there. In one chair in a corner his pale-faced father sat, talking a little occasionally, and thinking of the days when he took a more active part in the affairs of the world. Thinking, too, no doubt, of the absent son, whose future he had been at such pains to secure, both in a business and matrimonial way.

What would happen when the son returned and told him that he would under no circumstances carry out the promise he had made, to marry Ida Bruce? Kingdon trembled at the thought, but he did not believe anything

could make him swerve from his determination to marry Margaret Rivers or die a bachelor.

Intuitively Brooks knew that the subject of the engagement was a distasteful one to his friend, and he did not again allude to it. He could not help reflecting that the registering of two persons as "Mr. and Mrs. Taylor" had something to do with it. The matter had a strange fascination for him, but he had no intention of taking pains to probe the mystery.

The first time he had seen Ida Bruce he thought her the most queenly creature he had ever beheld. He had looked upon her fiancé, as Kingdon was already reputed to be, as the most happy of mortals. He knew that was the general opinion in and about Boston, and he was greatly puzzled to find that some cloud had come into the happy story of the young couple.

"Mr. and Mrs. Taylor!" Had Dale married while abroad and taken another name on the boat to avoid a premature announcement of the fact to his father? That seemed the most probable explanation to his remarkable conduct.

"It will be practically impossible to live together on this steamer a week and avoid each other half the time," said Kingdon. "I should not like to do it, even if I could. Mrs. Taylor is at present in her cabin, but she will be on deck, I trust, before the day is over. You will be likely to see a good deal of her."

"You intend to present me, then?"

"Certainly. Our mutual talk will be about Europe and the United States, in a general way, as far as I can guide it. I think Margaret—" he paused, regretful at his error—"Mrs. Taylor will say very little on any subject when we are together."

"As I said, and as I wish to emphasize," remarked

Brooks, with that flush which came so readily to his face, "I want to know nothing of your private affairs; but, in order that there may be no confusion, tell me one thing: Am I to consider, in my conversation, that you are married to this lady; is that what I am given to understand?"

"That is exactly what we wish you to assume," replied Dale, "in case the necessity arises to assume anything. For reasons which I cannot explain if I would, we have registered in that manner, and we wish to keep up the assumption till we are landed in New York."

Soon after saying this he excused himself and went to attend to some business with the purser and head steward. While determined not to meddle with matters that belonged to another, Sidney Brooks could not help bringing his legal mind to bear on the case before him. From the concluding statement of his friend he gathered that Kingdon and the lady with him were unmarried. He had not said so definitely, but he had spoken of it as an 'assumption.' A thousand conjectures might be made of their reasons for traveling under a false title. There was certainly nothing to show that Kingdon's marriage with Miss Bruce had been broken off, or even that this voyage with "Mrs. Taylor" had anything to in it of a reprehensible nature.

Still, as he kept saying to himself, whatever the affair meant, it was nothing to him. He could not undertake to act as guardian of the morals of a universe. The world was a queer one, and strange things happened every day.

Half an hour later, being in the dining saloon, he was spoken to by the steward.

"Mr. Taylor has asked me to give him and his wife

seats next to you, and the gentlemen who had them have consented kindly to make a change."

"That will be very pleasant," stammered Mr. Brooks.

Involuntarily he glanced at the card which the steward had placed by the two plates, and read them: "Mr. Taylor, Cabin 46; Mrs. Taylor, Cabin 47."

The lunch bell rang while he was thinking about the matter, and he braced himself for the ordeal before him. To his relief, however, Kingdon came to the table alone, with the explanation that Mrs. Taylor did not yet feel equal to sitting up, and would be served in her cabin.

Margaret was not really ill, but exhausted with the strain through which she had passed. In her excited state she was already sorry that she had yielded to the temptation to follow the man she loved into the New World. Still, she trembled to think how she would have felt at this moment had his vessel disappeared across the brine and left her to face the hopeless future of poverty alone. The contending emotions dealt severely with a physique none too strong, and the girl lay prone upon the sofa in her cabin, a very pitiable object.

Why had she ever left Cairo in his company? she asked herself a thousand times. There was the point to separate, as her conscience had told her plainly. Every hour spent together made the parting more and more painful. Why had she succumbed to her great love at the Hotel Royal? Instead of making it easier to part, either for her or him, it had made it infinitely more difficult. And here she was, registered as his wife, living a lie!

But, on the other hand, her situation had been, indeed, trying. When she had resolved to give up so much for the sake of that American woman whom she had never seen, she had need of something to strengthen her

heart—a single, happy memory to assuage the agony the after years of her life must hold. She had stolen nothing from Miss Bruce. Mr. Dale would marry Ida yet at the hour he had agreed—she would make him do it. The ten days before he reached land were hers! She might have taken all the days he had, but she had reserved to herself only this brief space, giving all the rest to her rival.

On the second day, at evening, she appeared at dinner, and ran the gauntlet of many eyes as the probable bride who had come aboard at Gibraltar.. She was presented to Mr. Brooks, who sat next to Mr. Dale, and exchanged a few words with him. Brooks decided that he could tell nothing about her yet, and waited to get a better opportunity to form an opinion.

She was certainly a pretty woman, though, he reflected, she had nothing of the radiant beauty of Miss Bruce. She wore mourning, which added to the subdued appearance that had become natural to her. She looked as if she had passed through some recent trial. The paleness of her face might be ascribed partly to this and partly to the effect of a day at sea. When the dinner was ended, Margaret walked for half an hour on the deck, leaning on her “husband’s” arm, and the most of the passengers satisfied their curiosity regarding her at that time. Then she retired and Mr. Brooks went to the smoking room to light a cigar.

The days that followed were much like this one, though Miss Rivers was more upon the deck than at first. She had little conversations with Mr. Brooks, in which he learned that she was of English birth and had lived much in the East, but nothing more.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST IN NEW YORK.

At six one morning, Miss Rivers went early upon the deck. She saw from the window of her cabin that land was not far away—that the harbor of New York had already been entered. As she walked about, her eyes searched for a familiar face, and she soon saw it, with its eyes gazing interestedly toward the shore.

“Good-morning, Mr. Brooks,” she said, as she approached him.

As he turned and looked at her, she saw that he was not over pleased at the encounter. He replied politely, but there was a lack of cordiality in his manner that he, perhaps, did not realize.

“Good morning, Mrs. Taylor,” he said, lifting his hat.

“I want to ask a favor of you,” she said, wistfully. “I want you, by and by, when we have landed, to give this letter to Mr.—to Mr. Taylor.”

She held a little envelope in her hand, offering it to him, but he made no move to take it.

“Why do you not give it to him, yourself?” he asked.

“Because—I am sure you will not betray me—I am going to leave him as soon as opportunity offers. He—he is not my husband—I knew long ago that you had guessed it—and I must relieve him of my presence. I can’t explain any more, but when I am gone this note will simplify matters, and prevent his instituting a search for me. Won’t you please give it to him?”

“I am sorry to refuse, but I really cannot mix in the

affair," he answered. "The chief steward or the purser might accommodate you, but for very strong reasons I cannot."

A look of deep distress overspread her features, and there was a suspicion of moisture in her dark eyes. She said "Good-morning" again, not angrily, and went toward the dining saloon.

"I suppose I've been fearfully impolite," said Brooks to himself, "but really I don't see what else I could have done. Not married to Dale, eh? Well, as she says, I never believed she was. It's one of those freaks that good men fall into in their youth and, according to what she says, it ends here. He will go back to Newton, and marry Miss Ida—who will never know of the escapade. I wonder," he mused, "what she would say if she did know of it. There would be an end to her wedding preparations, I guess. She's not the sort of woman to stand a thing like this, if it came to her ears."

Margaret found that the head steward was busy, and, on reflection, thought it best not to give him her note yet, for fear of accident. Soon after she knocked on Dale's door.

"I think you will have to hasten," said she. "It will take some time for you to dress and pack," she added, as he opened the portal. "I have been up for an hour and a half, and have only just finished."

"At the hotel—to which we are going," she continued, in a whisper, "there must be no more of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. You are again to be Kingdon Dale, and I Margaret Rivers."

When he was ready they walked to the saloon, where Kingdon went through the form of declaring to the officials that he had no dutiable goods, either in his baggage or that of his "wife." For this purpose he was obliged

to answer to the name recorded on the passenger list. Then they went to breakfast, eating the meal in comparative silence.

Sidney Brooks had taken his breakfast already and left the table. The other passengers around them were chatting gayly at the prospect of being so soon on shore. A number of ladies whom Margaret had never seen made their appearance—the inevitable contingent found on all Atlantic steamers, who keep their staterooms during an entire voyage on account of seasickness. Goob-byes were being exchanged, with promises to write, always so rife at the end of a voyage between people who have formed friendships which they believe will be lasting. The brightness and bustle struck a contrasting chill to Margaret's heart. Most of those around her were going to happy homes, after some months or years of absence. She alone seemed to have come to a foreign land, where no one knew her and where she had no hope of anything more than the barest subsistence, if, indeed, she was so lucky as to find that.

They went upon the deck, where, absent-mindedly, Kingdon pointed out to her the islands of the Harbor and the tallest buildings on shore, as well as the spider's web which the great Brooklyn Bridge appears to the distant sight. He could not talk of much else, for fear of making a scene. The attitude of the couple, joined to the dejected appearance of Margaret and the mourning that she wore, caused comment among the passengers, who decided again that the American had married an English wife who had lately suffered some great bereavement. The belief settled down to a deceased mother, whom she and her husband had gone to Europe to bury.

At last the steamer reached her dock and was made

fast. The plank was arranged and the passengers alighted. With little delay Kingdon passed the examinations, and he was soon on the way to a hotel with his companion. Their hands stole together as they rode through the streets, but neither dared utter more than common-places.

When they drew up in front of the hostelry, Mr. Dale asked the girl to remain for a few moments in the carriage while he inquired if suitable rooms could be obtained, as it was a time when he supposed the house would be quite full. He had hardly passed out of sight when Margaret made a quick resolve and acted upon it.

She had given up the plan of asking the head steward of the steamer to deliver the little note of farewell which she had offered to Mr. Brooks. She had acquiesced in the suggestion that Kingdon should remain with her for a day or two, until he could find her a situation, with the tacit understanding that all relations but those of friendship should cease between them from the time they landed. But when he alighted to look for their rooms a fright seized her.

She was morally certain that the rooms he would select would communicate with each other. She knew how hard it was for him to give her up, and she dreaded putting her weak strength of mind against his strong one. Should she enter that hotel she did not know how she could resist if he opposed her determination to leave. The present was above all others the time for freedom, and she made a bold dash for it.

The moment he was out of sight she called the cabman to the window.

"The large trunk and the smaller bags are to be taken off here," she said, hurriedly. "The other bag and the little trunk go on with me."

"What? You don't stop together?" said the man.

"No. Be as quick as possible, please. There is no time to spare."

Knowing no reason for delay, the man called to the hotel porters, who stood around, and had the designated baggage removed from his vehicle.

"What shall we do with them, ma'am?" asked one of the porters, when the articles named were deposited in the doorway.

"The gentleman will be back directly. He has gone inside to engage a room," she said. Then, to the driver: "Do you know of any respectable boarding house, where the charges are not very dear? I want to be taken to such a place at once."

The driver, for a wonder, knew of exactly such a place, and, mounting his box, drove off toward it. The room and board, with the price asked for the same, proving satisfactory, Miss Rivers settled for the cab and entered her new home. Her first act after finding herself alone was a very feminine one. She lay down on the bed and cried for an hour as if her heart would break.

As for Kingdon Dale, his surprise and disappointment may be imagined when he found how he had been deserted. He inquired of the employees of the hotel who had seen the carriage if they remembered the number or would recognize the driver if they saw him again, but in both these points he was met by negatives. It was plain that they thought the joke on him a huge one, for he could discern covert smiles in their faces and felt that they would not help him, even if they could. The lady had meant to give him the slip, and their sympathy was all with her.

He could not explain the state of affairs to these fellows, and, rather than remain in a house where the story

was certain to be repeated among the guests, he took a second carriage and went immediately to another one.

What was to be done? He did not want to leave Margaret to the tender mercies of a strange country. He sincerely wished to aid her in every possible way to earn a living, since it was clear she was bound at any cost to carry out her intention of leaving him. But New York is a large place. She might have left the city by one of the numerous trains, reaching out into the country in a hundred directions. She would, without doubt, do her best to avoid him.

The more he thought of the matter the more disheartened he grew. His conscience pricked him severely for the part he had played toward her. He was no roué—she was the first woman toward whom he had ever acted in this dishonorable way. He would never have been led into it but for the belief that he could right his wrong by marriage.

What were her chances to obtain an honest living? He feared they were not of the best. She was pretty, very unsophisticated, and nearly penniless. He knew just how much money she had, for the day before landing he had put a hundred dollars in American money into her purse, from which he had taken the last shilling when they left Gibraltar. She had protested when he did this, and he had promised to take it back again as soon as she was settled in a good place, and was certain she could spare the amount.

A hundred dollars! It might last her six or seven weeks with the rigid economy she would be sure to practice. And, after that!

Without the least idea that he was likely to see her he walked up and down the streets all that afternoon and into the evening, peering into every female face he en-

countered. He was without hope, and yet it seemed as if he could not give up. People stared at him, so pale, so wrapt in his quest. He had eaten no lunch and no dinner. About eleven o'clock at night he met on the sidewalk a familiar form and stopped at the warm greeting of Mr. Gordon Hayne.

"Why, Kingdon, where did you come from?"

"I don't know," was the strange reply.

The speaker was so full of the object of his thoughts that for a moment he could not collect himself.

"See here," said Hayne, "you're not well. Come inside one of these restaurants and take something for your nerves."

Not able to resist, though he hated to have his walk interrupted, Kingdon followed his old acquaintance into a brightly lighted place, and, in response to a request to state what he would take, said simply that he did not care.

"You are ill," said Hayne, eying him closely. "You'd best have a little brandy and water." He indicated to a waiter who had appeared that he might bring the beverage designated. "When you've swallowed that I'll get a carriage and take you to your hotel. Where are you stopping?"

"I don't know," was the guttural answer, while Mr. Dale showed signs of collapse.

"For Heaven's sake, brace up!" said the other, becoming alarmed. "You had too hard a sea voyage, I guess, and haven't got your land legs yet. Think, Kingdon," he added, fearing that his friend would faint before he had given information as to his hotel. "Where did you get your dinner?"

Mr. Dale looked blankly at the questioner, and then, the brandy and water arriving, sipped some of it slowly.

"I don't think I've had any dinner," he said, finally.

"You came in on the Mediterranean steamer from Gibraltar this morning, didn't you?"

Dale eyed his companion nervously.

"How did you know that?" he asked, rousing himself.

"I guessed it from the fact that your father told me a few days ago that he had had a letter from you dated at Malta, and that you intended taking the southern route home; and I saw in the noon edition of the Telegram that the boat was in."

The explanation quieted the young man, and the allusion to his father opened a new train of thought.

"My—father—is he well?"

"About as usual; and very anxious to see you. If the news of your steamer's safe arrival was in the evening edition of the Boston papers, he will sit up to-night waiting for you. Your best way now is to take the midnight train, and be at home early in the morning."

There was something in this suggestion that caused Kingdon to break into immoderate laughter, not loud enough to attract attention from others in the room, but sufficiently strange to cause Mr. Hayne a good deal of apprehension.

Had his friend completely lost his mind?

It was the kind of laughter that is often followed by tears, but in this case the manifestation stopped short of that.

"If you have really had no dinner, you should eat something," said Hayne. "Nothing is worse than an empty stomach."

Kingdon acquiesced in the idea of refreshments, and a repast was soon spread before him, of which he partook with a reasonable appetite. The effects of the viands

were almost immediately apparent in his improved appearance.

"I cannot go to Boston to-night," he said, when that subject was again broached. "But perhaps I will go to-morrow. I have a little business to transact here—for my firm. Yes, I think a note stating that I have arrived might be sent home. It will relieve father of anxiety in case he hears of the arrival of my boat."

Stationery was procured, and the epistle indited, a messenger being summoned to take it to the railway station, as it was too late for the postoffice.

"You'd better let me walk to the hotel with you," said Hayne, when the name of that establishment was at last given to him. "I'm at the Brunswick. And to-morrow, unless you're a great deal better, I advise you to be careful not to go about too much. You gave me a start when I first met you, upon my word!"

As there was nothing to be gained by continuing to patrol the city in his present condition, Kingdon consented to go home and to bed. After his arrival there he relapsed for a time into his former condition of despondency. It did not seem as if he could close his eyes when the girl he loved so well might be already a victim to the snares and wiles that would be set for her feet.

But tired Nature had her way at last, and he slept the sleep of an exhausted man till morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

"YOU ARE A SICK MAN."

When Kingdon awoke it was with a start. The problem which he had been obliged to face on the previous day was still in existence.

For a full hour he did not attempt to rise. But, though he thought of the dilemma in every conceivable phase, its severity did not abate. Margaret had deserted him in a manner that showed how strong was her purpose to end all connections between them. There was a possibility that to-day or to-morrow, frightened at being alone in a strange land, she would relent and come in search of him. If she held out beyond that he did not know where to find further hope. He could not long delay going to see his father, but he resolved at least to wait in the city forty-eight hours.

There was no telling whether the English girl was still in the vicinity or whether some of the trains that run to all points of the compass had taken her miles and miles away. He would write a few words home, stating that he had arrived, and that a business matter would delay him in New York for a couple of days. In the meantime there was the patrol of the long streets and avenues, the perusal of the newspapers, the frequent returns to the office of the hotel where she had left him, with inquiries and a careful injunction to each of the clerks to detain any person who might call for him.

Gordon Hayne came around about ten o'clock to inquire after his condition, and Kingdon, who was then at

breakfast, got rid of him by a plausible story, without giving offense. Gordon said he was in the city on no particular business, merely passing the time. While the coffee was disappearing he took occasion to speak of Edward Dale and of the Bruce family, but Kingdon paid little attention to the subject.

"There isn't anything that I can do for you, is there?" asked Hayne, as his friend excused himself. "I don't like to see you looking like this, and my time is wholly at your disposal, if it's of any use."

"No," was the reply. "I am upset a little about a business matter, but I guess it will come around all right."

"If you want any money—pardon me—you know you have only to mention it."

"Thank you. It is nothing of that kind. Good-bye."

He was very much broken up. Hayne, who knew him so well, was perfectly certain of that. But there was nothing he could do, either to help his friend or to satisfy his curiosity, and he parted from Kingdon without either of them alluding to a possible reunion.

After walking aimlessly about for a time, peering into the faces of every woman he met, Dale returned to the hotel and copied from a directory a long list of intelligence offices. These he obtained help in arranging in some order as to their distance from the hotel and the direction in which they lay. Then, taking a carriage, he explained to the driver his desire to visit the entire list as fast as convenient, and set off on that errand.

"I wish to engage a young woman to teach two children the ordinary branches," was the story he repeated at each office. "An English girl, newly arrived, would be preferred."

At two or three places they said they had exactly what

he wanted, and called out of adjacent rooms various types of females to prove the assertion. They would not do, however, and, leaving an address, fictitious, of course, at the general postoffice, he arranged that in case anything more suitable presented itself he was to be notified. By evening he had tired his driver, the horses and himself, and discovered nothing.

In the hours between dark and midnight he could not rest. He renewed his wanderings in the streets. How very many women there were without escorts! Not a few of them were on errands that filled him with horror. He thought continually that Margaret, the pure and gentle Margaret—for to him she was still pure as ever—might yet join that sisterhood.

She had hinted of it in some of their talks, this dernier resort of the woman who has to wrest her living from the cruel world. It drove him frantic to think of the probable fate of such a girl, alone, friendless, ignorant of life, with no trade or profession—unless he could find her.

His steps grew heavier. Perhaps she had already begun the downward career. The descent into hell is so easy!

Struck with a new idea, Kingdon called a cab from a stand and told the driver to take him on a round of the "pleasure houses" of the city. It was but a chase for wild geese, and one resort was as likely as another to bring him to what he sought. He had known hitherto but little of this kind of thing, but he had a general notion of the manner in which these houses were conducted.

He went from one to the other, ringing the bells, being escorted into the parlors, seeing the troops of painted girls enter for his inspection, noting the eager glances

which they cast upon him, each one hoping to touch his fancy. He paid for the wine that was proposed, though he did not lift the glass to his own lips. He questioned each madame as to whether there was on her list of boarders a young English girl lately arrived in the city, and excused himself from the house, with a feeling that he had already outstayed his welcome as far as the occupants were concerned.

This he repeated at a dozen places. Then he realized how hopeless was his quest—how improbable it was that Margaret would happen to be in any of these houses, how unlikely that he would find her even if she were, when there were five hundred other shady resorts that he had no time to visit. Overwhelmed with his emotions, haggard and distraught, he was driven back to his hotel.

On the way he stopped at the other hotel and renewed his inquiries as to whether any one had called to ask for him. Nobody. Reaching his own hostelry, and going toward the elevator to seek his chamber, Kingdon met Gordon Hayne in the hallway.

"I am going to bed," said Dale, briefly, to his visitor.

"I want to talk with you a moment," responded Hayne. "Let me go up with you."

Much as he would have liked to escape the conversation, Dale did not know how to do so. The two men ascended together, and soon the door of the chamber was closed upon them.

"I don't want to impose upon your privacy," said Gordon, when they were seated, "but the condition in which I find you makes it my duty. You are a sick man, with something on your mind that is driving you distracted. I am your friend, your companion of long years, and I cannot leave until you are in a better con-

dition. Last night, when I first encountered you, you were nearly out of your mind. This morning you were unfit to go out alone, but I had to let you. To-night you need a physician, if ever a man did. Now, Kingdon, you can't go on like this. You needn't tell me what is the cause of it, but you must take my advice. I know you will have a month's illness unless this thing is stopped right away."

Dale realized as his friend was speaking that there was truth in what he said. He was very weak. His head was whirling. He looked in a mirror opposite to where he sat, and was shocked to note the pallor of his face and the circles that had grown around his eyes.

"What do you want me to do?" he stammered.

"To let me send for a doctor, to begin with. He will give you a potion that will help you to a healthful sleep. Then I want to get a room near you and remain till morning. You ought not to be left alone. And to-morrow, throwing everything else aside, I want you to come to Boston with me, where your father is anticipating your return and watching for you with every train that comes to the station."

The mention of the word "father" did not impress Kingdon as Gordon had believed it would.

"There is another who waits for you," he said, at random. "The girl you are engaged to marry."

A distinct shade of pain crossed the other's features. Hayne did not understand its meaning, but he could not help seeing it.

"Very well," said Dale, after a strained pause. "Call the doctor. I do need rest, that is a fact. As for going home—we will talk of that when to-morrow comes."

Hayne touched a bell, and hastily scribbled a note, which he gave to the attendant who responded. Not

long after a doctor whom he knew quite well responded, and without any more conversation than was necessary a prescription was given, that was filled and taken.

Mr. Dale was too tired to make his sleep long in coming, and the character of the sedative relieved him of the restless dreams he would otherwise have experienced. Mr. Hayne stayed in the room for an hour, until he was satisfied with the regular breathing of his friend and patient, and then retired to a room across the hall, which he was able to secure.

Three or four times during the night he rose and went to look at the sleeper, for he had not removed more than a part of his own clothing, but there was nothing to be done. The morning came and found Kingdon's rest undisturbed, and it was after nine o'clock when he finally opened his eyes.

His first sensations were another sinking at the heart, as the truth forced itself upon him. But Hayne was ready with encouraging words; with statistics about the trains to Boston, and with allusions to the father who had not seen his son for months and whose anxiety must be great to welcome him. There was little prospect that longer delay in New York would avail anything. At least, Kingdon thought, he might go home and meet his father and business associates, and then, if any glimmer of hope came again to his breast, he could return and recommence his search.

He indicated to Gordon that he would go with him, and the one o'clock train was decided upon. He allowed his friend to send a telegram to Newton announcing the decision. Then he took a slight breakfast, packed his things, inquired at the other hotel office if any visitor had come or any mail, sent to the general post to see if anything had been received there from the intelligence

office people, and finally drove with his companion to the Grand Central Station.

On the train he had a relapse, and Hayne was obliged to administer a cordial to keep him from an entire giving way. The dreadful thought that Margaret was alone and helpless in that great maelstrom—that her fate could hardly be a matter of doubt—came over him like a flood.

Even should she relent in her mad purpose to avoid him, would she know where to find him? America was to her a terra incognita. She had passed most of her life in the East, where the conditions were so widely different. She was by nature shrinking and disinclined to ask favors. It might be that, at this moment, she was sobbing her sweet eyes out in an agony of regret at her desertion, and without the slightest idea how to proceed in a search for him.

Oh, it was maddening!

As the train approached its destination, however, Dale became calmer. He had a trial to meet, and he resolved to put on the best possible appearance till the first of it was over. He made himself as presentable as possible in the toilet room of the Pullman he occupied, and when Mr. Hayne parted from him, as he considerably did before Kingdon took the suburban train for Newton, he entertained no doubt that it was quite safe to do so.

"Good-bye," Gordon said, pressing his hand. "I'll see you in a day or two, or sooner, if you want me. These sea-voyages are depressing to many people, and a little longer time on land will set you right. My regards to your father—and—the Bruces."

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. BRUCE'S ADVICE.

The welcome which Kingdon Dale received at the paternal mansion was as warm as he could have expected. This was the first time he had been separated so long from his father, and the elder gentleman evinced his pleasure at seeing him again in no uncertain manner. It was some minutes before he noticed the ravages that mental distress had wrought in his son's face, and he was easily satisfied with the explanation that the weather at sea had been rough. The talk lasted until half an hour after the dinner was ended, and then Edward Dale suggested that Kingdon go without further delay to pay a call on his sweetheart.

"I have not sent them word of your arrival, as no doubt you thought I would do," he said, "so your coming will be a perfect surprise. Duty is duty, my boy, and must be considered before everything else. Don't stay too long, for I want another talk before I go to bed. How good it seems to see your face again!"

Still numbed to some extent by the events that had occurred, Kingdon could not help being impressed by the happiness of this relation, who had been, until within the past few weeks, the dearest person on earth to him. Before leaving the house he stooped over the invalid's chair and received a kiss on the forehead, after the old fashion.

The path that led across the field was bordered now with the country flowers of early summer. The grass on

both sides was green and fragrant, and the trees were in the full beauty of their foliage. The sun had set, but the evening was still suffused with light, and the air was as balmy as that of the islands he had visited in mid-winter. But the heavy weight on his heart overpowered all else.

Ida Bruce was sitting on a veranda of her house, and discerned his form some moments before he arrived. She called her mother in a low voice, through an open window, and when Kingdon approached near enough to make the action discreet, both ladies waved their hands to him and descended the steps. Their quick eyes saw, even before any words were exchanged, that he was in no very joyful mood, and they adapted themselves sagely to the situation.

The usual expressions of pleasure at greeting a wanderer were given as Mr. Dale approached and took their hands, and his answers were courteous enough. Still, no spectator would have imagined, from his manner, that the younger of these ladies was affianced to him, and that the day set for their wedding was only three or four months distant.

Mrs. Bruce had a great deal of tact, and she so managed the conversation that all went smoothly. She made him talk of the things he had seen, and alluded to her own foreign journeys, taken many years before. Ida did little but listen, and she did that very well. Her smile was ready when the situation called for a smile, and her fair brow darkened with apprehension when anything was said about the dangers of the deep.

The welcome home that both of them gave him was of a kind that would have gone far to influence his future, had he not been impervious to everything in that direction. He thought, in the pauses of the conversa-

tion, of the imperative necessity to let these people understand his true situation regarding them, before many days had passed. And the complications that were certain to arise filled him with dismal forebodings.

Excusing himself at an early hour, on the plea that his father was sitting up for him, Kingdon strolled back to his home. It was impossible for Edward Dale to let the occasion pass without alluding to the marriage, or speaking of the congratulations that had been showered upon the match from all sides.

"I don't believe you half realize, even yet, what a lucky chap you are," he said, with a chuckle. "Your fiancée possesses every requisite for marital happiness. She is young, beautiful, wealthy, and you are the only man who has ever in the remotest degree won her affection. It will be but a little while now before this will be yours, and you are already the envy of every marriageable young man within thirty miles of Boston."

It was no time to get involved in a controversy as important as this would be.

"I think I shall have to go to bed," Kingdon remarked, with a wearied look. "I am still very tired with my voyage, and you know I have a great deal of business to do to-morrow."

The father acquiesced, though with a trace of disappointment in his countenance, for he dearly loved the subject on which he had launched out.

The next day Kingdon escaped the discussion he so much dreaded. He was closeted with members of his firm until evening, and came home so late that his father had already retired. The succeeding day he managed to get leave of absence, with some business for the concern in New York as an excuse, and hastened to Newton to pack a gripsack.

“Well, business is of the first importance,” commented Edward Dale, sadly, as he heard the news. “You won’t be gone more than a day or two, I suppose. There’s time to run over and explain it to Miss Bruce, I hope. You’ve only spent a couple of hours with her since your long absence.”

Yes, Kingdon said, he would have the carriage stop there on the way to the train. He would return from the metropolis as soon as his affairs there would let him, of course. Then, fearing to talk too long, he bade his father a hasty farewell, and entered the cab which had been summoned.

His interview with the Bruce ladies was even briefer. They accepted his statement about the urgent and sudden business call without demur.

Arriving in New York, he went first to the postoffice, but there were no letters for him there. He drove next to the hotel he had intended to occupy, and found that no lady or other person had called to inquire for him or to leave any message. He received both of these pieces of information with equanimity, for his nerves had recovered something of their natural strength, and, besides, he had not allowed himself to expect anything different. There was no danger that he would collapse this time or require the services of a physician, although his regard for Margaret Rivers had suffered no diminution.

He next sought out the services of a detective bureau, and arranged for two of their “best” men (these bureaus never have any other kind) to search the city for the missing one. He told them her correct name, gave them the best description he could of her, and detailed the manner in which she had evaded him. There was no need to hint at the relations he had sustained to

her, but he did say that they had arrived from Gibraltar on the same steamer, giving the name of the vessel and the date.

The detectives commenced in a businesslike way by interviewing several hundred hackmen. Strange to say, they found the one who had taken Miss Rivers and Mr. Dale to the hotel and had then, at her request, driven her to a boarding house. Returning to their office they found Kingdon there—this was on the second day—and one of them went with him to the house designated.

The lady evidently wanted, who had, however, given the name of Roper, was easily identified at the boarding house. But she had remained only one night, and the landlady had an impression that she had said something about leaving the city.

As he listened to these words, Mr. Dale felt a deep conviction that all the efforts he might put forth to find this girl would be wasted; that fate had swept her with one gigantic wave out of his reach forever. He went back to the detective bureau, paid his bill, saying that he needed nothing more at present. Then he pulled himself together, and went about the business matters which had served as an excuse for his visit to New York, giving no indication to the gentlemen whom he met that a pressure calculated to drive one to insanity was weighing him down.

He returned to Boston on the third day, firmly convinced that he had lost his heart's love, and that he would never find her in this world; firmly convinced, also, that there was no consideration—even the health of his father—that could induce him to become a living lie in the person of Ida Bruce's husband. There was a conflict before him from which he would ordinarily have

shrunk to the extent of submission. He must meet it now, whatever its results, with a firm front.

The following day was Sunday, and in the afternoon he went to visit his fiancée. The sky was bright and the weather warm, and Ida responded with alacrity to his suggestion of a walk. The route selected was one seldom traveled much, a by-road shaded by tall trees. When they were out of hearing of any other person, Kingdon began the disagreeable task that lay before him.

"Ida," he said, in a strained voice, "I have brought you here to make a confession."

A confession! She started at the word, for she dreaded what might follow. When a young man talks of making a confession to the girl to whom he is engaged it may well excite her apprehension.

"I want to tell my story in a straightforward way," he continued, "and when it is ended I want you to forgive me, if you can. The plain truth is that I wish a release from the promise I made you before I went away. It is not from any fault with you; but the fact is, I have gone on in this matter against my judgment from the first—merely to please my father. It was by his request—almost by his command—that I spoke the formal words to you on the eve of my departure. His health was so poor that I feared to cause him distress, and at the time I really thought I could carry out the plan he has had so long at heart. But, Ida, I cannot do it. I have no such sentiment toward you as a man should have toward his intended wife. I like you extremely well. I should be glad to think I could always share your friendship. Marriage should, it seems to me, be accompanied with warmer feelings. Unpleasant as it must be for you to hear this, it is even more unpleasant for me to tell it. I will go further and say that I con-

sider it a plain duty to make this revelation, for a marriage between people under these circumstances could hardly result otherwise than as a curse to both of them."

Whatever had entered the mind of the girl when the theme of a confession was entered upon, she was wholly unprepared for what she heard. It was quite impossible for her to make a verbal reply until some minutes had passed, during which the walk was continued slowly and in silence.

"I wish you had had the courage to tell me this before you went away," she said, at last. "It would have been easier then to settle the matter. Now, when our engagement has been published broadcast, when all our friends have come to consider it as a matter of days when we are to be married, the embarrassment will be terrible. But, I don't mean to influence you in any way. If what you say is your full determination, I shall only have to confide it to my mother and abide by her advice."

He was relieved that she took it so calmly. He had half expected an outburst of tears, with perhaps a torrent of vituperation.

"One thing is sure," he said. "You are not, according to the popular use of the term, 'in love' with me. There will be no heart-breakings."

"No," she answered; "but to a woman there are other things that count for almost as much. Pride, fear of the slurs of the world, the rearranging of a life that seemed already mapped out. Then, this has been a favorite hope of both our parents. I have thought it my first duty to obey my mother. I have conceived that her regard for me was so great that her advice could wisely be followed. It will be a great blow to her, I fear."

Tears had come at last into her eyes and voice, but they were quickly overcome. Ida Bruce did not like to exhibit her feelings to a man who had just spoken to her in this manner.

"Well, Ida, I have a great deal of trouble before me, as well as you, if that helps console you," said Kingdon. "It has cost me something to come to these conclusions. My father has been accustomed to give his commands to me and rely upon my implicit obedience. For the first time since I can remember I shall have to make a stand against his will. I would not do that if I could see any honorable way to please him."

He thought, as he thus prated of honor, of the English girl, and his cheek reddened. Then he thought of her desertion, and he paled again.

"Let us go toward home," suggested Ida.

She wanted to be as soon as possible under the guns of the maternal fortress.

There was nothing more to be said, and they retraced their steps. Arriving at the house, Kingdon was about to say good evening, when the girl interrupted him.

"I want you to come in and tell mother what you have told me," she said. "It will have to be done some time, and the sooner it is over the better."

He would have been glad to escape, but he saw no valid reason to refuse her request. There were just so many steps on this disagreeable road, and he might as well take this one now as later.

He was ushered into a parlor and left alone for what seemed an interminable length of time. But Mrs. Bruce came at last, and Ida with her. The widow was apparently quite composed, while the daughter could not conceal the fact that she was still much perturbed.

"Good afternoon, Kingdon," was Mrs. Bruce's greeting, at the same time taking his hand. "Will you please tell me as near as you can what you have been telling Ida?"

"Well, it's just this," responded Mr. Dale, "in a nutshell. I had never been in love. I yielded to my father's wishes, trying to make myself believe I should feel different about it when the time came to marry. And I don't feel any different. I feel more than ever as the day approaches that I cannot carry out the plan. I think it honest and fair, both to her and to me, to state the case exactly as it is."

Mrs. Bruce bowed soberly.

"Have you said this yet to your father?" she inquired.

"No. I wanted to present the situation first to Ida, and ask her to release me. My father is an invalid, and I dread the effect on his shattered health. I thought, Mrs. Bruce, that when you and Ida saw the situation as it is you would help me close the engagement in a way that would mitigate my father's regret. Surely," he added, desperately, "there is nothing worse than to marry without love!"

The widow was silent for a moment.

"I do not think," she said, "that you realize the position in which this places Ida. Her engagement to you was announced six months ago, with your consent. Congratulations have been showered upon her from a hundred quarters. Nearly ever since your departure milliners and dressmakers have been at work making preparations for the wedding. It has even been settled who are to be invited, and most of the guests have been privately apprised of the fact, in order to give them time for preparation. An engagement is considered in these

days a very serious thing; not a promise to be broken because one of the contracting parties takes some strange notion into his head. As to your idea of not loving Ida sufficiently, that comes in thousands of cases after marriage instead of before. I cannot say that I had a sentiment for my husband strong enough to be called 'love' on the day we were united, but our regard for each other grew hourly. My dear Kingdon, I believe you have been working yourself into a state of hypochondria, from which a little rest and right thinking will relieve you."

But to this he shook his head decidedly.

"Nothing whatever will change me," he exclaimed. "There are reasons which, were I at liberty to give them, would convince you."

"Are these reasons anything," asked the lady, slowly, "that reflect upon my daughter?"

"No! no! A thousand times no!" he cried.

"Then she must not suffer from them," said Mrs. Bruce, decidedly. "Speaking in her name, I must declare that we shall hold you to your agreement."

"*Shall?*"

"Shall insist," replied the lady, impressively, "on your carrying out your promise of marriage."

Mr. Dale rose.

"I never shall carry it out," he said. "Never, Mrs. Bruce."

"People have changed their minds before now," was the quiet answer. "When you have given a few hours more thought to this matter you will conclude that to inflict suffering upon a young and innocent girl does not accord with your highest and best views of what is right. It is too late to withdraw from your plighted word. Before Heaven you are pledged to each other almost as truly as if the clergyman had pronounced the

words. But let us say no more about it now. I want you to think this over for another day."

He uttered an exclamation of distress.

"Thinking it over will only drive me mad!" he replied. "I have thought it over now until I can hardly eat or sleep. I know it is an injury to Ida; if it was only to me I could bear it better. To refuse to marry her precipitates a train of troubles; to marry her would let loose an avalanche!"

Not daring to trust himself to say more, the young man left the house, and walked toward his own home. He meant to tell his father everything, and have another chapter over with, but he saw the doctor's carriage at the door, and learned from a servant that Mr. Dale, Sr., had just been prostrated by one of his attacks, and was in a very precarious condition.

CHAPTER XV.

IDA WARNED.

During the days that immediately followed, Kingdon Dale found the overwhelming love for his father, that had been for nearly his entire life a passion with him, returning with irresistible force. To sit by the side of his parent, ministering to him according to the doctor's directions, was his only consolation. Edward Dale was fully conscious, but too weak to talk, except in occasional whispers. It seemed to his son, however, that he could read but one thought in his father's mind, and that this was connected with the marriage on which he had so long set his heart.

The physician, at the end of a week, acceded to a request from the sick man to permit Mrs. Bruce and her daughter to enter his chamber for a few moments, separately. The widow, with rare judgment, contented herself with a moment's stay and a word or two of encouragement. Ida, who had not seen Kingdon since his announcement of his changed views, came at once to the bedside and, stooping over the invalid, imprinted a kiss on his wasted cheek.

Nothing that she could have done would have pleased Edward Dale more than this. His eyes lighted up as she rose. Beckoning to Kingdon to draw near, he took one of his hands and one of Ida's and placed them together between his own. It was a significant expression of his anticipation, even in his weak condition the uppermost thought in his brain.

With rare discretion Miss Bruce allowed the incident to pass without doing anything to annoy her fiancé, if such he might at that time be called. Certainly the young man did not think it an opportune moment to undeceive his trusting parent. When the interview in the sick room was ended, Kingdon spoke a few words, relating strictly to his father's illness, to the ladies in an ante-room, and they returned to their home.

It was a month before the doctor said Edward Dale might leave his bed, and during nearly the whole of that time his son was in almost constant attendance upon him. Toward the last, Kingdon permitted himself to run into the city and attend to a little business, but his absences were brief. As soon, however, as his father was pronounced out of danger, he was anxious to absent himself for a week or so. He made the excuse at home of affairs to attend to in New York, while the need of rest answered the same purpose at the office. He dreaded a renewal of the conversations with his father, that would certainly refer to the marriage. And, besides, he wanted to seek once more for traces of his lost Margaret.

Kingdon had not entirely given up his endeavors to locate the English girl, even since he returned to Boston and Newton. He had placed a "personal" advertisement in two of the metropolitan papers, asking Miss M. R. to communicate with the friend whom she had left so suddenly in New York on such and such a date, and promising not to interfere with her in any way, providing her circumstances were satisfactory to her. He had also offered a reward to whoever would send him information of the present whereabouts of a young woman answering her description, and had this announcement inserted not only in New York papers, but in those

of Brooklyn, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago and Philadelphia.

Nothing had been heard from either of these efforts, and the heartsick young man felt a wild longing to visit again the city where he had last seen his idol, in the mad hope that the quicksand which had engulfed her might cast her up again at his feet.

He made his plans so deftly that there was no time for his father to talk with him, beyond a simple good-bye. Arriving at New York, he conferred again with the firm of detectives he had formerly employed, and assisted them in searching the various lines which they recommended. A week was passed in this way, a weary week without a trace of sunshine, and the result was—nothing whatever.

What Mr. Dale sustained in the way of mental pain during that week the reader can only imagine. His love for Margaret Rivers had grown with every hour since she left him. His apprehensions for her safety doubled as time passed. He even feared that in desperation she had committed suicide, and among the searches he made was a careful inspection of the self-destroyed in a dozen cities, from lists sent to the detectives by request.

When he returned to Boston his belief that he would never see Margaret again was solidified. He was actually giving up all hope. Life would be to him a dreary existence unlit by love of woman, a mere round of business cares, of plain duties.

The other thing that troubled him now was the inevitable conflict with his father. He had seen this parent hovering on the edge of the grave too recently not to dread the encounter. But come it must; there was no escape.

Kingdon had had no private conversation with the

Bruce since he announced his intention of breaking the engagement, but on the day of his return from New York Mrs. Bruce sent him a note asking for an interview. It served at least as an escape from his father's tongue, and when the evening arrived Kingdon presented himself at the widow's residence.

Ida was not present, for which he was thankful. During two hours he was subjected to Mrs. Bruce's ingenious arguments, delivered with all her art and in her most agreeable manner. She presented the case in a dozen lights, in every one of which he seemed a wretch unfit for decent society if he carried out his scheme. Still he was not moved. He replied to everything that he had made up his mind; that he could not bring himself to consummate the marriage. He was very sorry for Ida; he would give anything if he could assuage her pain; but marry he would not.

There was nothing for Mrs. Bruce to do after this but to call on Mr. Dale, Sr., and acquaint him with the situation. The anger of the father, when he learned what she had to say, knew no bounds. When his son came home that night he turned upon him savagely, and in a torrent of rage demanded his reasons for this conduct. Kingdon seemed calloused by what he had endured, and did not mind as much as he once would have done the epithets that were dinned into his ears. He replied over and over that he did not love Ida, and that nothing would persuade him to wed her.

Seeing that the mode of attack he was using had no effect, Edward Dale's tone changed suddenly to a pleading one. He said he had a terrible secret to reveal to his son—one that made this marriage an absolute necessity.

"For years, Kingdon," he explained, seeing the astonished look in his son's eyes, "I have been in financial

difficulties. I have prevented the truth being known, but if my real condition was public to-day I should be in the bankruptcy court. Miss Bruce is rich. With an alliance between our families everything would be easy. You are my only child; Ida is the sole heir of her father. It would kill me to have my affairs dragged into the newspapers. To refuse this marriage would, therefore, not merely destroy the happiness of a beautiful girl who has trusted you, but would end the life of one who has no other hope to preserve a hitherto honored name."

The young man was astounded. He had imagined, while giving no special thought to the matter, that his father was comfortably off in this world's goods, certainly far beyond the line of poverty. They had always lived well. A snug sum had been paid into the spice concern to secure the partnership. When he mentioned these things he was told that the money put into the firm was borrowed on heavy interest, and with this marriage in view as the only way in which the notes could be taken up.

It was not a very honorable transaction, and he felt it to the quick, but he could not reproach a father for what he had done, however ill-advisedly, for his benefit.

He began to grow desperate. One by one all the props that had sustained his life had fallen away. His determination not to marry grew weaker, even before he was aware of the change. Since he could not hope for happiness himself, was it worth while to send to the grave in disgrace the parent who had lavished upon him the love of a full heart?

"Father," he said, with a deep sigh, "let me think of it a little longer. Give me a few days to consider."

During those few days Kingdon Dale thought incessantly. Margaret was lost to him—he no longer felt any

doubt of that. There had been but two beings who had ever claimed his love, and only one of them was left. Was it not best, on the whole, to make this sacrifice?

But the marriage—it would be a dreadful thing without love on either side! Well, he would leave that to those who insisted on its consummation. If Mrs. Bruce and her daughter were satisfied, he could stand it as well as they. He loved Margaret Rivers, whether she were dead or living, and he never could love another woman. If he told Ida that his heart was cold toward her, and that he was sure it never would be otherwise—and if she accepted him on those terms—she would have no right to complain afterward.

Would she consent to take him when he had told her this? He decided to test the matter.

Going directly to the Bruce residence, he sent up his card, with a line on the back, asking Ida to see him alone. Before coming down she had a council of war with her general-in-chief, whose advice was to promise anything whatever in order to bring about the marriage on the day originally set. Mrs. Bruce believed fully that, if the pair were once united, time—and not a very long time, either—would dispose of all their troubles. She had a shrewd knowledge of men, and great confidence in the power of her daughter's beauty to win over a recalcitrant husband.

"I have decided to be very plain with you, Ida," said Kingdon, when he had taken the hand of Miss Bruce, and seen that the door was latched behind her. "In the first place, do you still wish to hold me to my promise?"

Miss Bruce bowed modestly in the affirmative, at the same time smiling faintly. She bore evidence of embarrassment and of a tendency to silence.

"Very well," said the young man, drawing a long breath. "Now, my father has had a serious talk with me, and I have concluded to please him if I can do so and be perfectly honest to you. I do not love you. If you take me in marriage you will take my name only. I shall have to repeat the words of the service, or to give assent to them, saying I will love, honor and cherish you till death, and keep myself unto you, and all that sort of thing; but it must be understood between us, now, that I shall do nothing of the kind."

A complete wave of crimson spread over the girl's face as she listened.

"Excuse me," she said, rising and moving toward the door, "I would rather you said such things to my mother."

"Whether I say them to your mother or to you," he replied, "I shall never vary from them. I have resolved that, if you insist upon holding me to my word, I will go through the marriage ceremony with you. Beyond that I promise nothing."

It was not polite to utter these expressions; Mr. Dale knew that very well; but he was in no mood for politeness. While announcing his change of mind as far as the ceremony was concerned he had the feeling of a man coerced, and he meant to make his dose of medicine unpalatable to others as well as to himself. He was determined, if they forced him into an alliance which he detested, that they should do so under no misconception. They might lead the horse to water, but they never should compel him to drink.

Miss Bruce bowed low as she left him, partly to conceal the quiver of her lip and partly to hide the tears that sprang in spite of all her efforts to her eyes. She

sought her mother, and fell on that lady's neck with an outburst of sobs.

"Oh, mother!" she cried. "It is too much to ask of me! I cannot go on with this. He has become positively awful!"

Slowly the widow drew the truth from the trembling mouth, and a flush of indignation mantled her brow as she heard it.

"I will go down and see him," she said, sternly. "Compose yourself, my child. The marriage must take place. When it is over he will forget the silly notions that now cloud his brain. It must take place!" she added, with determination. "Don't mind his ravings, Ida. In a week after you are wedded he will forget that he ever talked such nonsense, and you will laugh to think you heeded it."

Descending to the parlor, Mrs. Bruce greeted her caller with her ordinary good-nature. She had a game to play, and diplomacy must be used to the last.

"What is the matter with you, Kingdon?" she asked, with an air of raillery. "How can you frighten my little girl with goblins?"

"I have told her just what I mean," he responded, doggedly.

"And I respond in her name that we will hope for a better disposition on your part," said Mrs. Bruce, with a smile. "There are now but a few weeks before the date that has been announced, and everything will be ready on our side. It is gratifying to hear that you have overmastered your idea of breaking your word. As to the rest, let us leave that for the future. If love has not yet lodged in your bosom, await its advent. Ida will accord you every consideration, now that she understands your mood."

He was surprised to find her in this quiet temper. He would have been better prepared for an outburst of anger, which he could not help feeling his conduct in some measure deserved.

"And if love for your daughter never finds lodgment in my breast?" he said, slowly. "What then?"

Mrs. Bruce winced a trifle, but the smile of good-humor remained.

"And is this all that now stands between you young people?" she asked, as if it was very little, indeed.

"All!" he repeated. "Yes, it is all. I do not think you realize what an 'all' it is."

"Then let us turn the conversation into more agreeable channels," she replied. "Half the marriages that take place nowadays are on that very basis. Nine-tenths of them come out better than those of young hearts filled with ineffable affection. The wedding will take place, with your consent, on the day announced so long ago. You will, I presume, cover from the world any scruples you may have. Your father's dearest wish will be gratified; I shall be delighted, and as for you and Ida, you certainly enter the connubial state with a full understanding on a most important matter."

There was no use in talking longer with this lady, and Kingdon acquiesced, only saying that he would like a word with his future spouse before he departed. He wanted an explicit understanding between the three parties to this compact.

"It is not necessary," said Mrs. Bruce, affably. "Ida understood you perfectly in the first place, and you may guess how the repetition of such things to a young girl may be distressing. I assure you we have a perfect accord and that I represent her wholly in promising that

she shall take your hand in marriage, admitting the mental reservation you desire."

When the young man had gone, Mrs. Bruce went immediately to her daughter's room, where, as she feared, she found Ida stretched on a bed, dissolved in tears.

"It is done," said the voice of her mother. "There will be no talk of change after this."

"But," sobbed the girl, raising her woe-begone countenance, "does he say he never will love me, that he will always treat me with coldness?"

"Pshaw!" was the reply. "What difference does it make what a man says when he has a fit of temper? The point is gained that the ceremony is to occur on the date previously arranged."

CHAPTER XVI.

MATRIMONIAL PERJURIES.

To the many friends of the Dale and the Bruce families, all the struggles through which Kingdon Dale had passed were entirely unknown. The wedding had been announced long before for a certain date, and on that date it was to be solemnized.

Edward Dale brightened perceptibly when his son informed him that there was to be no more discussion—that he had given his definite word to Mrs. Bruce and would abide by it. The elder gentleman thought as lightly as did the widow of the dangers of uniting in wedlock a couple whose relations would lack something of harmony.

As to the financial troubles that annoyed him, the elder Dale felt that he would be perfectly justified in presenting the case to Mrs. Bruce when the ceremony was over, and asking a loan from the large fortune which her daughter was to inherit.

The preparations for the event, now but a few weeks away, progressed with renewed rapidity. Kingdon passed his time at his business office, paying occasional brief and very formal calls to his betrothed, and plunged in a constant state of dejection, from which it was impossible to rally him. His visits to Ida were without any further talk in reference to the matters that divided them. He was going to do the straightforward thing, and to carry it off in such a way that the public would never guess his real state of mind. That was the new contract he had assumed.

Gordon Hayne called occasionally to see his friend, sometimes at the office of the spice company, sometimes at the Newton home. He alone of the outsiders knew that something not down in the bills had happened. He had seen Kingdon in New York in a state but a shade removed from insanity. He knew that in spite of every effort the young man was still possessed with the mental disturbance that had then manifested itself. It was easy to see that the coming marriage was without joy to him—that it was to be entered upon unwillingly, or, at least, without enthusiasm.

Gordon spent many an hour in contemplating the situation, but was unable to guess at the mystery. He could not ask direct questions, and there was nothing to do but watch and wait.

Mr. Hayne was a frequent visitor, also, at the home of the Bruces. His presence there served to divert the attention of Ida from her unpleasant dilemma, for he was bright and entertaining, in spite of the muffled tone which he always used to her when they were alone. It is something to any young woman to feel that an eligible youth considers her unusually attractive—that he would propose for her hand if he believed there was any chance of success; and this was the attitude that Gordon constantly seemed to assume.

“You are engaged to my friend—I will be true to him in all my words and acts—yet I do not think him worthy of you; and my heart is heavy, both for my loss and his gain.”

Reduced to plain words, this was what Gordon Hayne seemed to say over and over to Miss Bruce, without uttering a single syllable that could be construed into these statements,

And Ida sympathized with him in his distress, and thought him the most noble and magnanimous of men.

"It is only two weeks," he said to her one day, "before you will be a wife. How infinitely happy the man must be who looks forward to that hour!"

It was not irony, she said to herself, as the untruth smote on her brain, for certainly Gordon could not know the secret so carefully treasured between the two families. It was the honest expression of a manly heart.

"It seems," he continued, "as if Kingdon was going to take away my right to be a friend to you. I shall have to reconstruct all my conduct when your name is Mrs. Dale."

"By no means," she responded, quickly. "I shall like you just as well as ever, and hope to see you just as often. Marriage does not compel one to reconstruct her list of friends; and you know you stand very high in mine."

The emotion that he could so well simulate made him turn his head away, lest she read too much in his convulsed countenance. Then he rose and said he remembered an engagement in the city.

"I am sorry you are going so soon," she told him. "Come as frequently as you can. And don't fill your head with silly notions that I—that mamma and I—will like you less after—after my marriage."

She held out her white hand to him, and he touched it with his own.

"Have you decided where you will live?" he asked.

"We shall have rooms in the city for the present," she replied, choking a little at the thought of leaving home.

He lingered a moment, as if he had something else to say, and then, bidding her a sudden "Good-bye," went

thoughtfully out of the house and down the walk. She watched him till he was out of sight, with a "Poor fellow!" on her lips and a throb of the purest pity in her heart.

The wedding took place at the Bruce residence instead of in church, on account, as was stated, of the ill-health of Edward Dale, which made it safer for him to avoid the uncertain temperature of a public edifice. Kingdon forced himself to appear in such a manner as to evade criticism. In the morning, being alone a moment with Ida, he had said to her, "You understand fully what my responses to the clergyman will mean?" and she had answered with a bow and a blush.

Her part in the ceremony was quite as trying as his, but both bore themselves well. All the expressions with which the church hedges in a couple who have declared their desire to marry were uttered by the clergyman and acceded to verbally by the man and the woman.

The large gathering of friends of the contracting parties could not suppress a murmur of admiration as Ida appeared. She was gowned with even more than her usual taste, and her luxuriant beauty of figure showed to the fullest advantage. Gordon Hayne, who stood near Sidney Brooks, had a twinge that was not all simulated, as he gazed at her. It flashed through his mind that his resolutions never to marry would receive a severe wrench could he set back the hands of the clock a few months. To own that delectable creature in fee simple was surely worth the sacrifice of freedom which he had sworn never to make.

As for Mr. Brooks, his habitual paleness was accentuated. He saw, beyond the room in which he stood, a steamship on the Atlantic, and this man who was to join himself in wedlock, sitting by the side of another

woman, devoted passionately to her every word and movement. He saw the passenger list, with the names of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. And this was less than three months ago!

It seemed as if he ought to speak when the clergyman asked if any one present knew any reason why this marriage should not proceed. But he did not, and the fateful proclamation that this couple were now man and wife struck like a note of evil on his ear.

The end of the service marked the beginning of the reception. Mr. and Mrs. Dale took the hands of a hundred friends and bowed their thanks for the congratulations showered upon them. With admirable nerve they answered smile for smile, and neither flinched in the least, except on two occasions. The husband was manifestly disturbed when he saw Mr. Brooks in front of him; and the bride knew that her cold fingers trembled when she placed them in the palm of Gordon Hayne.

"God bless you, my dear son!" came from the lips of Edward Dale, when his turn arrived, and the face of Mrs. Walden Brooks was positively radiant with satisfaction.

It was too late to start that night on the wedding journey, which was to be taken to the White Mountains, and, therefore, a suite of rooms at the Vendome had been engaged for temporary use. About ten o'clock the wedded pair bade good-bye to their friends, who would still remain for later festivities, and were driven toward the city.

"Well," said Kingdon, after a few minutes of silence, "it is done."

"Y-e-s," was the monosyllabic response, uttered in a trembling tone.

"And you remember—"

"Oh!" she interrupted, "don't let us talk of anything unpleasant just yet. I am fearfully nervous, from a hundred reasons, and a very little will make me give way."

At these pleading words a wave of shame swept over him. He saw how needlessly repellant he had been making himself to her.

"Ida," he cried, "I ask your forgiveness. I mean to make your situation as agreeable as is possible under the circumstances. Like you, I am in a nervous mood, for, although I am a man, I have had things to make me almost a child. Here," he added, impetuously, "let me take your hand. Let us agree to be friends, if nothing else."

She gave him the hand, encased in its glove, and he held it from sheer forgetfulness.

"We ought to reach the hotel in an hour, easily," he continued. "That will give a long night to rest, as the train we are to take does not leave until nine. It is a beautiful ride to the mountains—I think you told me you had never taken it? Everything in nature there is lovely at this season—lovelier to my mind than in mid-summer. The foliage has begun to change and some of the effects are magnificent. Then the hotel at which we shall stay is one of the best, and the drives in the vicinity are superb."

She listened to him gladly, thankful that he should pursue any subject except the one she dreaded, and he talked on at random until the lights of Boston began to thicken around them. At last the carriage turned a corner, and they were in stately Commonwealth avenue, passing the homes of princes, built, as is the street itself,

upon filled land rescued a quarter century ago from the ocean waves.

At the hotel he had but to mention his name, and the apartments engaged were instantly placed at his disposal.

"We had best say good-night," said Kingdon, when they were alone, "as we both feel fatigued after the events of the day. I have engaged three rooms and a bath, en suite. You will sleep there, only separated by this little partition from me. If you want anything in the night, call me at once. If you rap on the wall ever so little I shall hear you."

He had turned away and taken a step from her, when his bride, overcome by the strange sensations that filled her head, touched him on the sleeve. As he faced her again, she opened her arms and stretched them toward him.

"Mr. Dale—Kingdon," she said, gutturally, "don't leave me like this! I am afraid to be alone in this house—I never was in such a position before. If I am shut away from you by a door I shall have hysterics."

Her alarm was too real to be doubted, and he hastened to calm her.

"Both of the bedrooms open from this salon," he said, "as you can see. I will leave my door wide open, and you can do the same. There is no entrance to the suite except this one here, which I will now bolt as well as lock. We shall be substantially in one room all the time."

She followed with her eyes the objects at which he pointed.

"But there is no need of haste," she protested, though in a mollified tone. "It is still early. We can sit up a little while."

"Certainly, if you wish. I am not sleepy, to tell the truth. Wouldn't you like a lunch sent up?" he said, good-naturedly.

She assented, thinking it the surest way to consume time, and, besides, she felt a trifle faint and thought a mouthful of something would do her good.

The effect of the lunch was what should have been expected. It restored to both of them something of their natural serenity. A little before one o'clock Ida proposed of her own accord that they retire. Her last request of her husband was to make sure that he left his door wide open. Then she closed her own, and in a sort of instinct locked it. He had to knock several times in the morning before he could awaken her, and, on comparing notes at breakfast, he admitted that he had also slept very well.

The first night of their married life had been passed with no especially disagreeable episode. This was something.

On the way to the railway station an event occurred which set all his blood in motion. He was talking in an ordinary tone to Ida about the journey they had begun, when, happening to glance from the carriage window, he saw a figure on the sidewalk that caused his words to freeze in his mouth. Either there were two women in the world who looked exactly alike, or he had beheld Margaret Rivers in that Boston street!

His impulse was to stop the carriage and run after her, but the reasons against this procedure came to his mind contemporaneously with it. He might not find her in that crowd, with the diverging streets running in fifty different directions. If he succeeded, there could be no more inopportune occasion to learn what he wanted to know. He had barely time enough to catch the

train. He could neither abandon his wife nor ask her to accompany him on his peculiar mission.

If the English girl was living in Boston, as from her manner he judged she must be, it would be no very difficult matter to locate her. Boston was not New York. A determined attempt would be almost certain to succeed. And, besides, the ceremony of yesterday, which bound him to the woman at his side, cut him off forever from the wild hope that Margaret's discovery would have brought two days earlier. He would hunt for her, and, if permitted, would assist her; but to marry her—that was now a dead dream of the dead past.

The carriage was flying rapidly along, for the clock on the outside of the station was in sight, and the driver realized that he had no time to spare. Kingdon's sudden start had not been lost upon his companion, but she had, of course, not the faintest suspicion of its cause. No mood that he would be likely to assume was in any danger of surprising her particularly.

The horses dashed up to the archway and entered it. The driver descended with alacrity and helped out his passengers.

"Three minutes left," he said, brightly. "You have your tickets, I understand. Third track on the right."

During the hours that passed before the Crawford House was reached, Mr. Dale said very little to his wife. He ordered a lunch for both at the proper hour, and assisted in disposing of it. The rest of the time he was wrapped in thought. Ida was not wholly displeased at this turn in affairs, for silence was at least better than a return to distasteful subjects, of which she was constantly in dread. Kingdon's manner was courteous, and she did not deem it wise to disturb his reverie.

The first thing he did after arriving at the Crawford

House was to carry out a project which he had formed during the day. He wrote this letter and mailed it to Sidney Brooks:

MY DEAR SIDNEY: I am going to ask you to do something for me—as a lawyer. I wish you to treat it as a business matter, and to keep it secret as between an attorney and his client. I think you will remember a Mrs. Taylor, who crossed from Gibraltar to New York on the same boat with you last summer. She is in Boston and I want her address. I authorize you to employ whatever help you need. She is also sometimes known by the name of Margaret Rivers. Her personal description is known to you.

Upon securing any information which you believe of value, please send word immediately to the Crawford House, N. H., where I expect to remain a week. Very truly,

KINGDON DALE.

N. B.—This is a business matter solely, and never to be mentioned between us in any other way. K. D.

This letter was delivered to Mr. Brooks on the following afternoon at his Boston office. He read it through twice, and then wrote the following answer:

Mr. Kingdon Dale, Crawford House, N. H.

MY DEAR SIR: In answer to your communication, just received, allow me to say that the business which you desire me to transact does not come within the sphere of the legal profession. I have never, let me add, followed the trade of a spy or a pander. Yours, SIDNEY BROOKS.

When this reached Mr. Dale he was for a time in a state of rage bordering on dementia. But as time passed he began to realize how the matter had presented itself to the mind of Mr. Brooks. He knew that Kingdon had passed for ten days, at least, as the husband of the woman he now sought, and every action of his, from the day he met him on the boat at Gibraltar to that of his

marriage with Miss Bruce, proved that the pretense was false. Now, while on his wedding journey, he had apparently sought to enlist his friend's aid in renewing the illicit relations. It certainly had not an agreeable look, and Dale was disposed, the more he thought of it, to forget the bitter sarcasm of the lawyer's letter.

However, the necessity of finding Margaret and of ascertaining if she had the necessities of life still remained. His marriage had not relieved him of that duty.

Not feeling inclined to intrust his mission again to the mails, he passed a long and dreary week at Crawford Notch without doing anything about the matter. His mind was so filled with it that he never thought of entering on further debate with his wife as to what their future should be, for which she was thankful. Her life at the hotel was not very cheerful, but it might have been worse had he chosen to discuss on all occasions the unhappy questions that divided them.

The week ended at last, and the wedded pair returned to Boston, where the rooms they expected to occupy for the winter were ready to receive them.

Both were glad to return. She wanted to see again her idolized mother, and he believed it could be but a few days now before he would stand face to face with Margaret.

CHAPTER XVII.

"WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?"

Mr. Gordon Hayne, as the reader is already aware, was not a man of impeccable virtue. Possessed of a handsome face and figure, dressed invariably by the best tailors, endowed with the most agreeable manners, and with a fortune to spend as he pleased, he found much satisfaction in the society of the fair sex, and did not limit his acquaintance to those of unquestionable character. A pretty face was as apt to attract him among the crowd on a sidewalk or at a public entertainment as if he had been introduced in the most formal manner.

He tried to believe himself a very miserable person when he returned to his rooms in the city on the night of Ida Bruce's marriage. The physical charms of the bride had appealed to his senses in an unusual degree. He had known women who were beautiful; but none of them possessed the attractions that had gone to this unappreciative fellow, who was as fit, he thought, to judge their value as a wooden image.

He tossed restlessly on his bed, and found sleep only when the morning light began to illumine the room in which he lay. The next day he was gloomy, and hid himself from his usual associates. The third day he was a little better, but still morose. In the evening he went for a walk among the by-streets of the city, for the sake of getting the air and still run no risk of meeting acquaintances.

The extent to which the present Mrs. Dale had filled

his mind did not, however, prevent his noticing each comely face or pretty form that he encountered. And at one of the corners he met a young girl in whose personality he was immediately interested.

The face into which he looked was not exactly handsome, and yet it had a fascination about it that fixed and held the gazer. There seemed a whole history in the large dark eyes, at once shrinking and inquiring. The girl's dress was very plain, and its materials were black.

Interested to a remarkable degree almost before he was aware of it, Mr. Hayne followed the figure, which had turned at the corner and gone down a side street. He was idle; he had nothing else to do. If anything came of this pursuit, well and good; if nothing resulted, what would it matter?

It was soon apparent that the girl was walking in much the same way as himself, with no particular destination. She crossed her own path several times, going up a street and down another, returning as often as otherwise to the original location.

Several times light remarks were addressed to her by young fellows at the corners. The only attention she paid to these observations was to quicken her pace, without turning her head.

Mr. Hayne managed to keep the girl in sight without appearing to observers to be on her trail. He noted with pleasure that she was not, apparently, a woman of the town, judged by her lack of attention to the remarks alluded to. She was either what she seemed, a virtuous girl, or searching for a lover who was expected to keep tryst in this vicinity. She was poor, without a doubt, and those who possess wealth always expect to derive an

advantage from the poverty of others. She was worth following.

At last, seeing the girl go into a street which had but one outlet, Gordon waited and watched her. She must either enter one of the houses on this short way or return. It was soon evident that she was going to pursue the latter course, for she showed signs of surprise when she reached the end of the street and discovered that it went no farther. She came back slowly, and when she reached Mr. Hayne there were no other persons within hearing.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said, in a pleasant voice, and stepping in front of her. "May I speak to you for a moment?"

It was the first time she had noticed him, for her eyes had been fastened upon the pavement during most of her walk. She looked up with a startled surprise. A glance told her that he was a very well-dressed gentleman, and her natural instinct whispered that he could want nothing good of her.

"I do not know you," she responded, in a trembling voice. "You have no right to address me."

She resumed her walk, more rapidly than before. But Gordon, who knew the lessons of street acquaintance by heart, was not in the least discouraged by the rebuff. He followed after her, murmuring in the sweetest voice that she ought not to misjudge him; that she had his highest respect, and that if she would give him but a minute he would prove the assertion.

It was a sight familiar enough in most cities. As the pair progressed on their journey through the streets they were observed by more than one passer, who stopped and surveyed them with an air of amusement. The girl was walking fast, with her face turned from the

man at her side, whose persistence suffered nothing from the manner in which his addresses were received.

The crowds increased as the girl neared her home, and laughter came from various groups at the spectacle created. But the feather that was to break the back of the camel came when a half-drunken loafer reeled from the building against which he had been leaning, and put his hand on the girl's shoulder, while he shouted a wholly unprintable invitation in her ear.

The girl stopped as if she had been shot, and shook with fear. The disagreeable quality of Mr. Hayne's importunities were as nothing compared with this assault. His tones had at least been kindly, his words those of a gentleman. In the dilemma in which she was now placed, she turned instinctively to him for protection from the greater danger.

"Oh, sir!" was all she could articulate, but her wish was clearly understood. Taking the loafer by the coat-collar, Hayne whirled him around like a top, ending by leaving him in a heap on the pavement. Luckily the fellow found no sympathy from his companions, who seemed rather pleased than otherwise at his mishap. Seeing that the coast was now clear, and that an opportunity wholly unexpected had placed the young woman under obligations to him, Gordon drew her not unwilling arm through his own, and lost no time in putting a good distance between them and the late collision.

"I thank you very much, indeed," said the feminine voice, when they were safely away from the place. "And now, if you please, leave me here—I am obliged to go home—"

"My dear child," interrupted Hayne, "let me at least accompany you to your door. You are possessed with a notion that I intend you some harm, and are almost as

much afraid of me as you were of that rascal below. I am a gentleman, and have lived in Boston all my life. I wonder what there is about me that makes you want to run away. Do I really look such a terrible villain?"

She stole another glance at him, and was partially reassured by the engaging smile on his countenance.

"It is not that, sir," she stammered, "but there is nothing in common between a poor girl like me and an elegant gentleman like you. If you wish to do me a real kindness, you will leave me here."

"To be insulted by another drunken wretch!" he exclaimed. "No, I must see you safely home. It is evident you are not used to the treatment you have just received. I judge that you are a stranger in Boston."

In spite of herself she was being drawn into acceding to his proposition, and she felt herself growing less and less afraid.

"I have not lived here long," she responded, resuming her walk. "I do not know the streets very well. I only left my room to breathe the air, with no particular errand in view."

He laughed brightly.

"How remarkable!" he said. "That is exactly my own case. I had spent the whole day indoors, and felt the necessity of a stroll. Do you live far from here?"

"No." She named the street. "I think it is only five minutes. I can find it, sir, alone, and I am sure no one will molest me now."

But he would not listen. The street to which she was bound, he said, was on the direct road he was obliged to take, and it was best that they go together.

At the doorway of a poor lodging house she stopped, and announced that this was where she lived,

The extreme poverty of the surroundings would ordinarily have prevented a wish to go farther, but there was something about this girl that made Mr. Hayne especially loth to leave her.

"Does your family live here?" he asked, surveying the front of the house.

"I have no family," she replied, unguardedly. "I am all alone."

The sympathy written on his face aroused an answering chord in the girl's breast. She did not like to be impolite to him.

"Don't think me inquisitive," he said, "but I am wonderfully interested in you. You—work for a living—I suppose?"

She bowed her head with a blush.

"I do sewing."

"It does not pay very well, I am afraid."

She did not answer. She was trying to think of the best way to end the conversation. She had reached her home now, and there was no longer any excuse for his remaining.

A rough-looking man came out of the house and addressed the lodger.

"It is against the rules to talk on the sidewalk in front of the house," he said, harshly. "Either take your friend inside, or go away with him."

Quick to seize the opportunity, Mr. Hayne took advantage of the girl's confusion, and replied, "Certainly, we will go in. Just for a moment," he added, in a low tone.

There was no way to stop him except by a debate, which she did not wish her landlord to hear, and the girl led the way uneasily to the third floor, where she paused with a key in her hand.

"You claim to be a gentleman," she said then, in tones of entreaty. "If you are one, I beg you to leave me."

"I will do so in three minutes, if you insist," he replied, lowering his voice. "To go now would subject me to suspicion from that pleasant proprietor of yours. Why, my child, I wouldn't harm you for the world." He took out his watch. "Three minutes. I swear it!"

She inserted the key in the lock and let him follow her. The room into which they entered was poorly furnished, but as neat as possible. He took in everything at a glance.

"You see," she said, biting her lips. "There is nothing to attract you. I am a poor, working girl; nothing more."

"As I supposed," he replied, sympathetically. "But I also see that you were not always in that rank. You have had an education. Your speech and manners show that you were well-born and have moved in better society. No, don't speak just yet. I am mindful of my promise. I have hardly two minutes left. I want you to do me a favor."

She surveyed him with wide-open eyes, her expression not unmingled with doubt.

"I want you to accept a little present."

She shrank away, exclaiming, "No, no!" but he persisted.

"Let us not waste time." He held the watch in his hand while he talked. "I have a fortune, the income of which is several times greater than my wants. There is no sensible reason why you should not accept a trifle, when it is so evident that you can find good use for it."

He laid several bank notes on the table.

"What do you expect in return for this money?" she asked, huskily.

"In return for the money—nothing. To be candid, however, I do hope that you will let me call again, now I have convinced you that my purposes are honorable."

She sat down and commenced to weep.

"By the promise I made, and which I mean to keep," said Hayne, "I have less than a minute left. Before I go, will you tell me your name, so that I may have the appearance of an honest man when I call for you?"

There was a knock on the door. Hastily wiping her eyes, the young woman went to open it.

"Well, have you got the rent?" said a voice, which Hayne recognized at once as that of the disagreeable person he had seen below stairs.

"To-morrow I will get it," she answered, with a feeling of shame that the gentlemanly appearing visitor should hear the demand.

"You have told me that twice. I do not run a free lodging house. I shall wait no longer. In the morning you will be put out. You understand?"

The man's steps were heard descending, and the girl came back into the room with renewed tears on her cheeks.

Mr. Hayne stood there awaiting her.

"My time has all expired," said he, putting the watch in his pocket. "Shall I go?"

She looked at him with blinded eyes, and then at the bank notes on the table.

"Don't leave that money," she said. "I cannot take it."

"You prefer to let the fellow who just called execute his threat?"

She drew a long breath as of despair.

"If he puts you out to-morrow, what will you do?"

"Ah!" she cried, lifting her hands, "there is always a last resort!"

"And you would rather embrace it than take this money, which I offer you freely?"

She seemed to consider the two horns of the dilemma.

"I promised you to go in three minutes," he said. "I am ready to keep my word. But is it not best that I sit down with you a moment longer and see if we cannot have an understanding?"

She nodded, motioning him to resume his seat. In a moment so very desolate it was better to run some risks than to be left alone with her grief.

"In the first place," he continued, "take that money and put it in your purse. It is yours. I shall not touch it again under any circumstances."

He pushed it toward her with the hat that he held in his hand, and she obeyed him mechanically, though with evident reluctance.

"Now, won't you tell me your name?"

"Why do you want it?"

"Because I feel that we ought not to end our acquaintance here. Because I believe that, when you have thought a little longer, you will say I may come again."

"But," she exclaimed, turning red, "you can have only one object. A man does not seek the company of a poor girl like me unless——"

She was unable to proceed.

"And you won't even tell me what name they call you?" he asked, with his most winning smile.

"You could find that by asking below," she replied, as if in thought. "It is Mrs. Taylor."

"That is better," he said, affably. "But, are you married, then?"

Thinking that the money she had accepted entitled the giver at least to courtesy, the young woman answered:

"I lost my husband several months ago."

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I am sorry to arouse unpleasant memories. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?"

"You have been so kind," she faltered, "that I don't know how to thank you. I was, as you surmised, brought up in a different station from the one in which you see me. Last summer circumstances compelled me for the first time to seek my own livelihood. I have made a sorry mess of it. The only thing I could find was sewing, and the rates paid are so low that even this room and the most meagre food cannot be earned by the longest hours. I had a little money, and it is gone. But for your gift, to-morrow would have seen me shelterless."

"You have no relations or friends to whom you can appeal?"

"None nearer than England; and they have already responded that there is nothing to be expected from them. They are nearly as poor as I."

The pathos of the story made its impression upon him. Certainly at that moment he had no intention of wronging this unhappy creature. All that was sentimental in his nature cried out for her.

"You spoke a little while ago of a 'last resort,' " he said. "What did you mean by that?"

"Death!"

"That is dreadful, for one so young to contemplate."

"I can die, but not dishonor myself!" said she. "I have no wish to die, though life has lost every charm for me. I am willing to work, as long as my

strength lasts, at any employment, no matter how disagreeable. The person who would secure me but that opportunity I should call friend, indeed."

"The best thing for you," said Hayne, "is to let me be what my impulse proposed from the first, your banker and adviser."

She looked at him searchingly.

"It is not possible," she said, "that there is a man in the world who would render such a service without hope of reward. You—you are not a clergyman?"

He shook his head, with another smile.

"Simply a rich young idler, who has taken a fancy to aid you. Think it over, Mrs. Taylor. I don't like that formal title. Your Christian name would suit me better—Elizabeth, Anna, Katharine—"

"Margaret."

"Think it over, Margaret. It is not much for me to offer. I would like to have you move to a rather better house—I'm not in love with your landlord. But don't agree to anything now. Only say that I may come to-morrow, or the next day. You'll feel better acquainted when you've seen me the second time."

What was she to do? She said he might come—that she would be very glad to have him come. It seemed like a dream that such a gentleman should have taken an interest in her, based on anything but the craving of a sexual nature. Her purse, except for his present, was empty. She could not refuse a helping hand held out in such a manner.

"Good-bye, Margaret," he said, rising.

"Good-bye. I do not know what to call you yet."

He did not mean to give her his right name so soon.

"You may call me Kenneth Kane," he said and left her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

At the end of their week in the White Mountains, Mr. and Mrs. Kingdon Dale returned to Boston. Kingdon explained to his friends that duties at the office made it impossible to stay longer. They "settled down" in the apartments that had been engaged, and, as far as the world could see, were like any other young married couple, except, perhaps, a little more sensible in showing their affection before outside parties.

The very first thing the young husband did, even before going to visit his father, was to see a detective and put him in possession of Margaret Rivers' description. He had given up the dearest hope of his life—that of calling the English girl his bride—but the duty of seeing to her comfort and securing her a means of livelihood was still his. A dreadful mischance had prevented his finding her a few days sooner, in which case the current of three lives might have been changed.

He could not help believing that if he had met Margaret after she had tried the hard task of supporting herself, that the difference in the career he could have offered would have overcome her scruples. But the evil was done. He was wedded to a woman toward whom his attitude could never be more than that of a very distant friend, and Margaret was to face her fate, with or without his aid, as time might decide.

His reception at home, when he reached Newton, was most cordial. He had Ida with him, and his father lav-

ished his warmest caresses on both. Mrs. Bruce was sent for, and accepted an invitation to dinner, as it was easier for Edward Dale to receive his friends than to go abroad. There was all the necessary dissembling, and the meal passed without special event. When it was over, the guests divided into two parties, and each parent was alone with his child.

"Well, Ida?" was the anxious inquiry of Mrs. Bruce, as the door between them and the hall swung as if by accident, so as to partially close the portal. "Have you had a happy honeymoon thus far?"

The bride flushed.

"I am not going to answer any questions, mother," she said, pleasantly, "and you need ask me none."

This attitude was so different from any she had ever shown before that the widow could not help expressing in her countenance the surprise she felt. She looked at her daughter searchingly, to see if any answer might be found in her face, but there was nothing to satisfy her.

"Let us talk of you, and what you have done without me," added Ida. "How have you borne the first long separation we have ever had?"

"But, Ida, you should tell me at least this: Has he been kind to you?"

"He certainly has. Now, please drop the subject and do not refer to it again. If there was anything very wrong I should surely tell you; but I am now a married woman, and cannot discuss my husband with any person—not even with the dearest and best mother in the world."

Coupled with the softest and gentlest of tones there was the most perfect determination. The widow felt, with a twinge of pain, that the child she had parted from a week before would never come back to her. With

the judgment which years had taught her she refrained, however, from pursuing the line she had begun, and led the conversation into the details of the journey to New Hampshire.

The married couple had ascended Mount Washington, passed a night there, ridden to the Glen House, afterward visiting the Flume and the other prominent features of the mountains. Between the lines of this recital the mother sought in vain to gather something that would answer the query uppermost in her mind.

Ida had learned discretion and reticence, if nothing more, during the first week of her wedded life.

In the library, on the other side of the hall, a door had also swung on its hinges, pushed by the cane of an elderly gentleman in an armchair.

"You rascal!" he exclaimed, jocosely, "are you satisfied now that I did you a service by driving your no-marriage nonsense out of your head? I thought a week with that adorable creature would change your mind. You are the happiest and the best-looking couple in Massachusetts to-day."

Kingdon had schooled himself to expect some such remark, and he smiled into his father's face, though a cold shudder came to his heart.

"How has your health been?" he asked. "I did not expect you would write anything to worry me, whatever way you felt."

"Splendid," was the reply. "I haven't been so well for years. One of my chief troubles has been my worry about you; yes, in spite of my faith that you would come out all right, I fretted a great deal till it was over. There is only one thing now to wholly relieve my mind, and that is the money I shall have to ask of Mrs. Bruce. Still, I need but fifteen thousand dollars, a baga-

telle to her. Why, Bruce was said to be worth six hundred thousand when he died, and they can't have used half the income for the past fifteen years."

Kingdon bowed. He felt few compunctions of conscience or of pride that his father should have to ask the mother of his wife for pecuniary aid. They had been bound to bring about the marriage—let them settle these things to suit themselves. He was getting hardened.

"Did you notice," chuckled Mr. Dale, Sr., "how they withdrew to the parlor as soon as they could safely do so. Women are daft on secrets. And you actually came near losing that prettiest of her sex! You would never have forgiven yourself if you had seen her married to another man. There's one, too, who would have given everything he possesses to have owned her. He came out here after you went away, and he looked like a ghost."

The surprise on the son's face asked the question his lips did not utter.

"You never saw it—never dreamed of it? No, I'll wager not," said the father, with another chuckle at his own shrewdness. "Why, Gordon Hayne has been madly in love with Ida for ever so long. Now, don't get excited!" he added, as the son gave an unmistakable start; "he's never said a word nor given a hint to her, knowing that she was picked out for you. But he couldn't hide his sentiment from an old sharper like me. I've seen him in her drawing-room, when the house was full of people, talking to everybody else, keeping as far away as he could, and yet hardly taking his eyes from her. At the wedding he was as white as a sheet, the honest, loyal fellow! She was destined for you, that was enough

for him. He'd have dropped dead before he'd have spoken. Lord!"

The closing expression conveyed to Kingdon the depth of Mr. Hayne's honest passion more fully than the most elaborate sentence could have done.

"I wish to God he had not been so particular!" he cried, in his soul. "He little thinks what a favor he would have done me if he had paid no attention to my 'rights' and pressed his suit to a favorable conclusion."

But this is not what he said to his father.

"I never noticed any of these things," he remarked, and it was evident their interest had ceased for him. "I did not think Gordon a man who would ever marry."

"He never will, now," said the father. "He's had a stab under the fifth rib."

At an early hour the young couple took a train for the city, with affectionate farewells from their elders. Mrs. Bruce tried to read in the eyes of her son-in-law what she could not learn from her daughter, but the page was equally blank.

"What time shall I expect you to-morrow?" asked Ida, composedly, as she received the maternal kiss of parting.

"About twelve. I shall only stay to lunch, as I have friends to dinner."

At noon Kingdon would be away. He did not lunch at home.

"You're not going without kissing me, too, are you?" said Edward Dale. "You are my daughter, now, you know."

Ida flashed a look of inquiry at her husband, who nodded impatiently. What was the sense in bothering? She might kiss every man in Newton for all he cared.

In the train they said little to each other, but before they retired she had a talk with him.

"You were very nice to mamma. I want to thank you."

"Your mother has always been very nice to me," he replied, coolly.

There was a pause of some seconds.

"She wanted to know—mamma did—about—whether everything was all right between us."

"And you told her, of course!" he snapped.

"No. That is what I want to say. I said I never should discuss my husband with anybody, not even her. I felt sure that you would adopt the same course toward me—that you would not tell any one there was the least division."

He was somewhat mollified by her statement, and by the manner in which it was made, but he had too many weights upon his heart to act very cheerfully.

"I shall do my best to conceal everything," he said. "And I think you have acted wisely. Your mother is a shrewd woman, however, and you will have to be always on guard."

Ida seemed to accept the situation. He was pleased at her attitude, for he had nothing but the best of wishes for her, and he knew her position would not be a happy one. They had got to live under the same roof, and meet many acquaintances, with the best face they could. He did not want his affairs the theme of public gossip, if it could be helped.

Only two days passed before Edward Dale addressed a letter to Mrs. Walden Bruce. In it he stated the extreme reluctance with which he unveiled to her a condition of his affairs which he had succeeded, by the strongest efforts, from revealing to the world in gen-

eral. The comfortable fortune which he had at one time possessed had been lost, with the exception of the house in which he lived, by unfortunate investments. Even the homestead was pledged, though the writings were not recorded, for more than half it was worth. These troubles had come coincidental with loss of health and bodily strength, and it was idle to think of remedying them by any action of his.

"As you and I," he added, "have but one child each, now united in wedlock, and as the undoubted future of our lands should keep them in one property, I make this proposition: I will deed my estate to Kingdon and Ida, jointly, if you will advance the sum necessary to relieve it from debt. I have not much longer to live, and my wants will be few. My son is in business which cannot fail to give him a livelihood and enable him to care for me the little time I shall remain on earth."

It was in the middle of the morning that this note was sent to Mrs. Bruce's residence, and it was less than half an hour later that the lady came to Mr. Dale's, in a state of high excitement, and asked to see him alone.

"What does this letter mean?" she cried, as if distracted. "It cannot—I am sure it cannot be anything but a joke—a witticism of yours to try me!"

"I wish heartily that it was not," answered Mr. Dale, sadly. "But, alas! there is no hope for it."

The lady staggered to a chair, and, falling into it, covered her face with her hands and sobbed hysterically. Never having seen her except in the happiest moods, Mr. Dale was intensely shocked at this exhibition.

"My dear lady," he said, "calm yourself. How can there be anything in my proposal to cause this outburst? True, I might have told you of my pecuniary condition before my son's marriage, but I had no reason to sup-

pose it would make the slightest difference with you. We have been friends so long—I knew that you and Ida were rich--and—”

Mrs. Bruce struggled to speak several times before she could make herself heard.

“Knew we were rich?” she ejaculated, at last. “Why, we are beggars! Every dollar my husband left has vanished. One investment after another has proved bad. My estate, like yours, is involved, and I intended to ask *your* aid before another week had passed. Poor Ida!” she cried, with sobs. “She has sacrificed herself for nothing!”

The invalid sat up in his chair and eyed her stupidly.

“Your property—all gone, too!” he repeated. “Your fortune of over half a million! And Ida—sacrificed herself? Explain.”

The woman tried to regain her composure, for it was evident that this man’s sufferings were as acute as her own.

“It is gone, I tell you!” she said. “We hardly own the furniture, and a loan secures the place we live in. Ida never liked the thought of marrying your son. She leaned toward another match, a young man who worshiped her, and who has an undoubted fortune in his own right; but I, in a silly desire to join these estates, and believing you the rich man you were reputed, held her to my will. I have wrecked her life and my own! It is a judgment on me!”

The invalid leaned toward her and drank in the words, feverishly.

“The young man you refer to is Gordon Hayne,” he said.

“Yes, with more than a million to his credit, good family, intelligence, everything. And my miserable

child has married your son, in the face of his assertion that he will never be a husband to her; that all she shall ever have will be his name! Is it not enough to drive one mad? How can I meet her and confess my fearful error?"

Afraid that she would go into a fit of hysteria, Mr. Dale suggested in a low voice that his visitor should be conducted back to her residence by one of his servants, and postpone the rest of the conversation to another day. She accepted the idea, and the housekeeper, being summoned, escorted her from the house.

Edward Dale sank back in his armchair. So this was the end of the kindness he had tried to do Kingdon. Married to a girl he did not like, with that awful ante-nuptial agreement! Married, with a bankrupt father and a bankrupt wife; with only the meagre income of a sub-partnership; all his bright prospects gone.

How could the father face the son? How could he bear to look into the countenance of that beautiful girl whose lips he had kissed two days ago? How could he hold up his feeble head when the sheriff came to oust him from the home where he had lived for thirty years—to hear the laugh of the thoughtless crowd at one who had made a failure of life after more than half a century of struggle?

His dear boy, Kingdon! He recalled the little fellow in his cradle, the child coming home from school, the young man whose future he had deemed secure.

Who would have guessed that the handsome fortune of Walden Bruce had succumbed to the sea worms that gnaw without being perceived until the crash comes?

Existence had been too great a burden to the sick man before this; now it could be borne no longer.

He knew where, in a cupboard, was a little phial from

which he was wont to take carefully, by the doctor's orders, a few measured drops when all other methods fail to induce sleep.

He took his stout cane in his hand and tottered to the closet. He reached for the bottle, and, securing it in his shaking fingers, returned to his armchair.

But ere he could pour out the deadly fluid, the Death Angel anticipated his act. A pain seized him in the left side, that made him drop the poison and cry out.

A servant who ran in, attracted by the cry, saw that consciousness had fled.

The physician, summoned immediately, said that a clot of blood had coagulated in the brain, and that the life of Edward Dale was ended.

CHAPTER XIX.

WATCHING FOR HIS PREY.

The death of his father seemed to Kingdon the last drop in his cup of misery. Within three weeks he had been left an orphan, married a woman whom he could never learn to love, and discovered that the only girl who had ever touched his heart was not only living, but had been within a few miles of him when he gave her up for lost. The financial crisis, precipitated by Mr. Dale's death, did not add to the pleasure of the general situation. It was plain that the home in which he was born would soon belong to others, and that of his father's estate but a very little, if anything, would remain from the creditors.

Mrs. Bruce was taken violently ill. When he went to visit her she could only talk of her troubles and of the error she had committed in consigning her child to the care of a penniless husband. He learned the condition of her affairs, which were now little better than his own. Somehow he was not moved by her recital. His wrongs, as he viewed the matter, were too great to admit of much sympathy for those who had caused them.

He attended strictly to the business of his firm, and was gaining gradually a place in the world of trade that would be recognized. The hope that he would be able, with additional capital, to buy a larger share in the spice concern died out. He had nothing but his hands and brain. These he must use to the best of his ability.

The detective who had been engaged to search for

Miss Rivers reported at the end of ten days that he could not find the faintest trace of her. Not feeling justified in spending money on what seemed a useless quest, Kingdon paid the man and let him go. He could not help, however, walking the street at all sorts of late hours, watching in the crowds for the missing face. He also inserted a notice in the Boston Herald, thinking that it might possibly reach her eye. But the heavy weeks passed, and nothing developed.

It was a dull life he lived as a married man. It was necessary to go to certain places with Ida, to avoid talk, and he performed such duties with the best grace possible. Most of the day was passed at business. He ate dinner with her, and stayed perhaps an hour after it, before he went out for his stroll. She had developed admirable qualities of judgment. Not only was there no collision between them, but there appeared no danger of any. He grew to feel at his ease in his wife's presence. A third person could sit at their table and not suspect that he saw the greatest endearments that ever passed between them.

As the time approached when Mrs. Bruce's affairs must be made public that lady made superhuman efforts to save her home and name. She went from one money lender to another, using her most persuasive efforts to obtain help; but everywhere the smiles which were evoked by her charming manner faded before the cold, plain statement of the value of her property and the amount of her indebtedness. At last, when all else failed, she bethought herself of a wealthy friend of whom it was strange she had not thought before—Mr. Gordon Hayne.

Gordon was not in the money-lending business, but he had abundant means and was certainly able to assist the

widow if he wished. She caught him at her own house one day, when he had come for a call, and told him her entire story.

"So you see both my estate and that of the Dales," she said, in conclusion, "are liable to go to the money sharks for what is hardly half their value." (It will generally be noted that people refer to those who have loaned them money as "sharks.") "Everybody concedes that land hereabouts will be very valuable in a few years. Look at the Back Bay district. Land sells there for twelve dollars a square foot, that was worth but forty cents a few years ago. There is talk of running a great boulevard through Brookline and the entire length of Newton. It will almost certainly pass through these properties, and that means a fortune to the owners. What a pity to sacrifice all that remains to this young couple when if it could be kept for a short time it might make them rich!"

Mr. Hayne admitted the correctness of the lady's diagnosis, and asked what assistance he could be in the case.

"Why, I thought—when the investment is so safe," she replied, "that you might lend a sufficient sum on the combined estates to free them, and perhaps allow a little over for my own small wants. You would, of course, have ample security, and there is no possibility that you would lose anything."

All men with money have their favorite investments, and real estate mortgages in the suburbs was not one of Mr. Hayne's.

"I will think about this, Mrs. Bruce," he said, doubtfully. "But in the meantime make inquiries elsewhere. Excuse me, but a proposition of this sort is a business matter, and must be considered from that standpoint.

There is some \$35,000 on both properties, I think you said."

"Yes," she nodded.

"Twenty thousand of it being on yours alone?"

She again assented.

"I shall have to talk with Kingdon, of course," he said.

Instead of talking with Kingdon at once, however, he went to call on his pretty wife during a part of the day when he knew the husband would be absent. It was not the first call that Gordon had made, and Ida thought nothing strange about it. She always mentioned it to Kingdon when he came home, and he only nodded, as if it did not interest him much.

Gordon's evenings were naturally taken up a good deal, while his mornings wore heavily. He called in sometimes at the spice warehouse and took Kingdon out to lunch with him. Gordon was a good fellow. He had wanted to marry Ida, and had lost her. If it was any pleasure to him to call and see her, Mr. Dale did not know why any one should object.

Ida liked him; she always had liked him. It was a delight to hear his name mentioned by the one maid that she kept and to see his face in her little flat. He still wore the air of a man who has loved and lost, but he bore his injuries with the grace of one who would die sooner than utter a complaint.

He had no reason to suspect the extent of the estrangement between his married friends. Presuming that they were in the enjoyment of their natural felicity, he would not have considered it the proper time, even were his intentions of breaking into the fold ever so pronounced, to commence the task. The practiced rouse knows enough to wait until the quarrels begin, till he

finds the object of his hope with reddened eyes; till, to his query about her husband's state of health, she answers, "I—don't know—and——I don't—care!"

It was one of the great points of Gordon Hayne's success with women that he could play a waiting game. He was among men what Russia is among nations.

For at least three years he had made up his mind that the day should come when he would possess Ida Bruce. Being cautious, fearful of danger, he had decided early that he would wait till after her marriage. He had never felt such an attraction toward a human being. The other amours that had occupied his time were only flitting fancies. This was the one *grande passion* of his entire life.

As has been said, he repented, when he saw her in bridal garments, that he had not broken his resolution to live and die unmarried. He ought to have taken this lovely creature to his own arms, and treasured her safe from all the world rather than give her for ever so short a time to another. He had a twinge now, like the lover Ovid writes of, to think he had permitted her to marry.

But so well did he carry himself, in the presence of both of them, that neither dreamed of the project hidden in his breast. Mr. Dale knew that Gordon's reputation in regard to women was somewhat shady, and yet he was received in the best houses, while nobody seemed able to swear to anything against him. Mrs. Dale knew even less than this, for the seamy side of life was to her little more than a vague mist. That there were men whose chief aim in life is to ruin pure women she had not even heard.

On the day after his talk with Mrs. Bruce, Mr. Hayne called on Ida Dale. In the course of his conversation he alluded to what Mrs. Bruce had told him.

"I don't suppose your respected mother realizes how much she asks me to do," he said, with a pretense of candor. "Those properties may, as she says, grow valuable some time in the future, but unoccupied land eats itself up with interest and taxes. It's all right for a family that wants a country place to buy one and get enough satisfaction out of residing there to pay for the carrying charges; but as an investment, it's quite another matter."

Ida nodded, as if she saw the point, but he read in her face that she was thinking of her mother's sorrow.

"If it was still *your* home, that would be a different thing," he mused. "I wouldn't let them take the roof from over *your* head. But you are married"—he gulped down something in his throat—"and will probably not live there again."

"As you are so kind," she interposed, quickly, "let me say that it is my mother's home, and that it will break her heart if she has to leave it. But I don't want to influence you. I know nothing about money matters. I supposed there would always be more than enough, and I don't understand now what became of it all."

A torrent began to seethe within him.

"Ida," he said—it was nothing unusual for him to call her by her Christian name—"do you ask me to save that home for your mother?"

"I cannot ask you," she stammered, turning rosy. "I have no right. If you can do it without loss—"

He watched her narrowly.

"It makes little difference whether I lose or not," he murmured, as if to himself. "I am responsible to no one. I never shall marry—now."

Poor fellow! How he had loved her! And but for a

cruel combination of circumstances she might at this moment have been his proud wife, rich and happy.

"I am going to try to save that home for your mother," he said, after a pause. "I won't undertake to count Kingdon's in, too; but your mother's I will certainly look into."

She rose and came to his chair, putting both her hands in his like a child.

"I shall owe you an eternity of gratitude!" she exclaimed, her eyes beaming. "How can I ever repay you?"

"The time will come," he answered, eyeing the carpet, as if he feared to meet her gaze. "I am sure the time will come when I shall need all your kindness and consideration."

She had not the least idea what he could mean, but she answered that if that time ever came he would have it fully.

"I don't say this merely because of your generous conduct in this matter," she added, "but you seem to me more than an ordinary friend, more like what I suppose a brother would be, if I had had one."

It was difficult to conceal the exultation that filled his heart. He would have loaned the value of a dozen estates like her mother's just to hear those words.

Upon investigating the subject, through a broker in whom he had implicit confidence, Gordon found, to his delight, that the investment he had been asked to make was not a bad one by any means. The security was well nigh perfect, and the chance of appreciation in value was considered more than an offset to any present risk. The broker suggested of his own accord that a lien on one of the adjoining estates would be a good thing to secure, as, in the event of the building of the projected

boulevard, the larger the area covered the better. So Mr. Hayne went to Mr. Dale with a proposition to carry out the idea of his dead father, uniting the properties and making him and his wife the joint owners. He was willing to pay off all the indebtedness and give to Mrs. Bruce \$5,000 besides, taking a blanket mortgage from the new owners.

Kingdon remarked, with a sigh, that perhaps if his father had been able to accomplish this result he might now be alive; and he then accepted the offer with thanks, though it must be confessed without enthusiasm. He did not care a great deal now about pecuniary gains.

The transfers were made and the mortgage executed, and Mr. Hayne figured, with the aid of his broker, that the interest would probably compel the proprietors to surrender the whole area whenever it should be deemed wise for him to take it.

While he was ready at one moment to sacrifice everything in pursuing his favorite game, he was never averse to being recouped for his powder and shot. In his nature, as in that of so many other men, lust and avarice often went hand in hand.

Sidney Brooks was agreed upon by all the parties in interest to attend to the legal matters. Mrs. Bruce mentioned him, Mr. Hayne seconded the suggestion warmly, and Mr. Dale saw no reason why he should object. The sharp answer that Sidney had made to Kingdon's letter was not forgotten, but it was only fair to say that, not understanding the true situation, there was some excuse for the tone he had used. The worst of it was, there was no way of redeeming himself in the eyes of the attorney, even in a small degree, but by telling the whole miserable story.

Brooks came to the flat occupied by Mr. and Mrs.

Dale for his instructions. He was the same pale, tall, slender fellow as of old, and he seemed momentarily confused as he glanced from one to the other. Kingdon, who kept his eyes on him as he wrote, imagined he could see in his very attitude an objection to the scheme he was engaged to forward. It was an odd conception, for how was there any way in which the details could interest the man of law except in their legal aspect?

"Mr. Dale deeds his property to me," said Mr. Brooks, "and Mrs. Bruce makes the same disposition of hers. The indebtedness on both is to be cleared off at the time. Then I encumber the combined estate with a mortgage of \$40,000 to Mr. Hayne, after which it is conveyed to Mr. and Mrs. Dale, jointly, as sole owners."

Mr. Brooks devoted himself to his work and presently withdrew, bowing and bidding good-bye to all present.

On the day the transaction was completed, Mr. Hayne returned from the registry of deeds with Mr. Brooks in a carriage.

"Well, it's done," he remarked, as if relieved. "I've had the satisfaction of doing a favor to friends, and at the same time I don't know as I've run much risk, either. Forty thousand ought to be safe on eighty acres of land within seven miles of the State House."

"The security is all right," responded Brooks, in a deep voice. "And *your claim is on the land*. So far I've been your friend and attorney. But," and he raised his voice, "if you ever try to put your claim *elsewhere* than on the land, I'm your enemy."

"Why, Sidney, are you insane?" was the startled inquiry of his companion.

"Perhaps," said the lawyer. "If you do anything underhanded in this matter you'll find an extraordinary method in my madness!"

CHAPTER XX.

"A FEW LITTLE LIES."

It is not difficult to account for the fact that neither Kingdon Dale nor the detectives he hired found any trace of Margaret Rivers, or Margaret Taylor, as she now called herself. Owing to the financial assistance which Gordon Hayne gave her she was able to take rooms in the suburb of Dorchester, where she remained most of the time, venturing very seldom into the city. The intelligence offices did not know her. The shops where hundreds of women are employed had never seen her face. The agencies for teachers and governesses had no such person on their books. The dens of infamy, which were explored thoroughly, could not count her among their unfortunate inmates. The procession of lewd women who march eternally up and down the avenues had not been augmented by the English girl.

The condition approaching motherhood in which she had found herself soon after escaping from Mr. Dale altered the entire course of the life she had to lead. It was idle to expect a position in a family, where there were children to educate, with this fact always ready to bar her progress. Although she might have convinced a would-be employer that she was an honest, married woman, he would not have cared to engage a governess whose physical situation rendered her liable to prostration at any time.

There remained nothing but sewing—sewing done at her home—and, as she told Mr. Hayne, the remuneration for this was very slight, indeed. The ladies who

rejoice over the "bargains" to be found in our big stores think seldom, it is probable, of the meagre wages that must have been paid to the miserable fingers that wrought the articles they buy. There is a tragedy in many a bit of lace, in hundreds of delicate adornments that are praised as being "so wonderfully cheap."

To pay for the poor room she occupied and obtain even bread to eat was more than Miss Rivers had been able to do up to the time Mr. Hayne met her, without spending the remnants of the little sum that remained in her purse when she left New York.

She came to Boston quite by accident, if anything may fairly be called an accident in this strange world. Her fear of encountering Mr. Dale drove her to leave New York on the second day after her arrival there. She knew almost nothing about the United States, and in his conversation with her, Kingdon had never happened to mention the name of the city where his office was located. She scanned the newspapers and hit upon the advertisement of the line of steamers that connects the New England capital with the metropolis.

The words, "to Boston and all other New England points" caught her eye and struck her fancy. "New England." It was something to think of a section bearing the name of her native country, and the fare was very low. That is how she came to locate in the city of her late lover in her search for a place where he would be the least likely to find her.

Before she left New York Margaret took a precaution which instinct taught her might be essential. She purchased a wedding ring and wore it as a sign that she had a right to the name of "Mrs. Taylor," which she felt impelled to retain. To be in the situation of a coming mother, without the insignia which excuses that con-

dition, was more than she could bear. To face poverty, hardship, want, that was something for which she could prepare; to meet the sneering lip, the scornful eye or the ribald laugh, was more than she deemed herself able to endure.

It may be wondered at by some that Margaret consented to accept the assistance offered by a perfect stranger, but if the reader will try for one moment to put himself in her place, he may be better able to understand. When Gordon Hayne entered her poor room she had not enough money to pay her landlord the paltry dollar and a half which he exacted as her weekly rent. She had proved that her ability at sewing was not sufficient to fight much longer against the tide. The ever-present dread of either shame or death paralyzed her energies and benumbed her brain.

Hunger drives a human being to queer devices. The lack of a shelter leads a girl to think of warmth and comfort, even in the company of a man whose attentions disgust and whose presence she loathes. But to Margaret the knowledge of her condition made this prospect doubly horrible. She firmly resolved that a plunge in the waters of the Charles must follow the failure of her attempts to live without disgracing her unborn offspring.

Opposed to such a prospect as this the offer of Mr. Hayne can be viewed in a different light. There was no choice between death and the acceptance of a little money, proffered in what seemed a good spirit, by a man who said that the sum was nothing to him. Those who cavil at Margaret's decision ought to be placed in the same dilemma for a few hours.

On Gordon's second visit to the room where he had left her, he stayed a long time. He drew from the girl

a statement of her life, altered only at the point where the necessity of deception forced itself upon her. She told him of her English birth, her Eastern youth with her father, of Captain Rivers' death, and then of meeting "Mr. Taylor," an American gentleman who had sympathized with her loss so strongly as to offer her his aid and at last his hand in marriage. It was on the way to America, she said, after only a few weeks of wedded life, that he died on the passage, and left her to land in a strange country nearly penniless.

"Have you hunted up his relations?" asked Mr. Hayne. "Perhaps he has some property that belongs to you."

No, she replied. She did not even know in what State he resided, being entirely ignorant of this part of the world, and trusting implicitly to him. But she was sure he was not a man of fortune. He was a clerk in some large establishment, she had gathered from his conversation.

She had given some time to the preparation of this story, and the listener had no suspicion that it was in any degree false. She looked like the innocent girl she was represented.

"You married Mr. Taylor without knowing very much about him?" he hazarded.

"I knew that I loved him! And I would have trusted him to the world's end."

The amount that it would cost to succor this creature was nothing to be counted. She was interesting, at least. She would fill in a vacant hour, and there was a charm in the novelty that went with her.

"So you have grown wiser since I was here," he said, with his winning smile. "You have decided to call me your benefactor, banker or what you please to term it?"

She stole a glance at his face, which did not escape him. In it he read the only doubt that troubled her mind.

"I shall not want much," she replied. "I prefer to do all the sewing I can get. If you will help me over the rough places—will take the worry off my mind till—till it is over—I shall be grateful. And, perhaps—I will keep account of every cent—some day I may be able to repay it."

He laughed. She was so innocent, so droll, so ingenuë.

"You will have other sewing to do," he suggested. "Little garments."

"Yes." She flushed with every sentence. "There will be some things, of course. Still, I don't want to stop the work I have been doing. I shall feel better if I am helping myself."

"The first thing you will do, if you wish to please me," said he, "is to get a more respectable place to live. This is simply dreadful, begging your pardon. I will attend to the matter if you wish. Somewhere a little out of town would be better, in a house with a private family."

She moved uneasily in her chair.

"Oh, it will be all right," he said. "I can afford to tell a few little lies—to say that your late husband was my friend, and that I have taken charge of your small fortune. People are not so suspicious as you seem to think. And if they were, the perfectly honorable relations between us will allay all doubts."

He convinced her by his straightforward manner, and she said he might look for a room, only he must bear the question of economy in mind. This he promised to do, and the next day presented himself with the address of

a house in Dorchester, where he had secured the refusal of a little suite of three furnished rooms, which could be had, he assured her, at a merely nominal figure.

"You had best go there alone," he said, "and examine the place. Make up your mind in advance that it will suit you, for you can't possibly do better. There is a sweet little married lady in the house, who will fill you full of information about your motherly duties. I will call here again to-morrow and see that you are all right to start, and as soon as you are settled I will come out and call on you."

Margaret found the rooms selected most delightful ones, and could hardly believe it possible when the lady of the house told her she should only charge two dollars a week, including heat and gas. If she had known that five times this amount was to be paid by Mr. Hayne she would have understood it better. With only slight misgivings she removed her few belongings to the new quarters, thankful that the disagreeable landlord of the former place could not frighten her any more with her insinuations and threats.

When one is cast into a measureless sea, and finds that a plank has floated near, he cannot be too particular about the quality of the wood of which it is composed.

Mr. and Mrs. Witham, who appeared to own the residence in Dorchester, seemed to be very pleasant people. There was a marked difference in their ages, he being at least fifty, while his wife was hardly more than twenty-five, and his business took him a great deal from home, but the attachment of the couple to each other was evident. Indeed, when the head of the house was there, they acted more like eighteen and twenty than the ages they were.

Mrs. Witham was very kind to Margaret, from the

first. The English girl intended to get her own simple meals in her apartment, but after a few days she yielded to entreaties to join her new friend at lunch, Mrs. Witham declaring that she was always alone at that meal and would consider her company a real favor. Then, whenever Mr. Hayne stayed to dinner, which he soon got quite in the habit of doing, Margaret yielded to the pressure brought to bear upon her, and made the fourth one of the party. Her coffee was finally the only thing she was sure to get in her rooms, and she found the new home much pleasanter than she had ever dared to hope.

Mr. Hayne humored Margaret in her fancy for sewing for wages, but through Mrs. Witham she secured work from ladies of her acquaintance, which paid much better and was more agreeable in every way. But what Margaret liked best was the sewing she soon began to do on the baby clothes which she expected to need, and which took the hours after sunset when she felt that the day had been honestly spent in labor for others.

Mrs. Witham accompanied her to one of the big shops in the city, and she made some modest purchases as a beginning. The delight of fashioning the things into form for use was as genuine as if the coming event had not been shadowed by the darkest clouds. God gives great compensation to women in exchange for the pain they endure.

It was in October that "Mrs. Taylor" went to live in Dorchester. She passed the winter there, finding the associations growing pleasanter each day. Mr. Hayne gave her no cause to distrust him. He came several times a week and showed a solicitude for her welfare that touched her deeply. She grew to have perfect confidence in him. He was so easy in his manners, he seemed

so gentle, so thoughtful, that Margaret learned to rely upon him wholly.

Gordon still paid frequent visits to the Dale household. He went there often when Kingdon was out and not infrequently when he was in. The slight mystery that he discovered in the relations of the young couple interested him. There was something strange in their attitude toward each other that he could not yet fathom. Until he understood this better he felt that it was no time for him to advance his lines.

Whenever Ida was spoken of in his presence, Kingdon relapsed into a set expression of countenance that was absolutely unreadable. The wife did a little better, having to some extent acquired the art of dissimulation, but there was a trifle of constraint for which the searcher could not account.

One day, when he was alone with Mrs. Dale, he found her in such a state of repression that he determined to risk a question.

"You'll pardon an inquiry from such an old friend as I am, won't you?" he said.

"Certainly," she answered, looking up surprised.

"Are you perfectly happy with Kingdon?"

The directness of the question was his salvation. It did not look like a sneaking attempt to pry into affairs that were not his own.

"I do not suppose," she replied, evasively, "that anybody has perfect happiness in this world."

"They should," he responded, decisively, "during their honeymoon. And with the right kind of woman a honeymoon ought to last a lifetime."

It was a very pretty sentiment, and she thought it did him credit.

"Mr. Dale is very kind," she remarked.

"But he seems to have something weighing on his mind."

"His father's death distressed him very much. His business at the office is very exhausting, too. He returns tired and not inclined to gayety."

She was ready to meet him at every point, and he changed his tactics a little.

"I am going to talk with him. If he has anything in the way of trouble I shall find out what it is. Why, it is perfectly dreadful for a man to be in his mood when he ought to be in the seventh heaven of contentment."

What would Mr. Hayne say, she wondered, if he knew the truth!

"Gordon," she said, in an outburst of emotion, "you ought to have a good, pure, sweet wife of your own. Yes, I am sure you would appreciate such a woman at her full value."

He shook his head despondently.

"It will never be," he said. "There are reasons which I cannot tell you."

He flitted between the house in town and the house in Dorchester, never dreaming how closely they were related to each other.

And he was present in the parlor of the Withams when the physician came down to tell them that Mrs. Taylor was the mother of a fine, healthy boy, and was doing very well, indeed.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIDNEY BROOKS TAKES A HAND.

Never for a moment had Kingdon Dale ceased to think of his lost Margaret. Although every effort failed, although he sank into a deep despondency over his unhappy situation, and indulged in painful dreams as to what life she might now be leading, he resolved in his inmost heart to be true to her memory. She was the only woman he ever had, ever could love.

He thought often of the curt letter that Sidney Brooks had sent him, and determined that he would, some day, confide his story to the young lawyer, for the double purpose of setting him right on the request so disdainfully treated, and also for the bare relief of dividing with some confidential person the secret that galled him. Mr. Brooks had never met him alone since that occurrence. When they encountered each other in public places the curtness of the lawyer's nod showed that he still held his former opinion of a man who would cross the ocean with a mistress just before his arranged marriage to a beautiful girl, and while on his wedding tour write to a friend to ascertain the address of the paramour he had either lost or deserted.

The early spring arrived before Dale put his intention into practice. One day he went directly to Mr. Brooks' office and asked a private interview.

"I want to tell you a story of a personal nature, and to get your advice and assistance," he said, as the cold, blue eyes of his companion were raised to his.

"Is it a legal matter?" asked Brooks, shortly.

"I don't know how much it may prove so," responded Kingdon. "But at least there is no reason why you should treat me like a stranger, when we had learned, I am sure, to regard each other as friends."

The stern expression on the lawyer's face did not relax.

"I considered the letter you sent me an insulting one," said he.

"So I supposed from your answer. What I wish to show you is that it was not so intended. To do that I shall have to refer to events occurring some time previous. Come, Sidney, don't be too severe until you have heard all."

"I don't know why I should hear all, or anything," was the reply. "You have your own attorney. Why do you not tell these things to him?"

"That would not do," said Mr. Dale. "I want you to see that I have a right to be still your friend; and, having established that point, I want to talk to you as one friend talks to another."

Mr. Brooks seemed to waver.

"What you say is to be under the seal of confidence between a man and his solicitor, I presume," said he, interrogatively.

"I will leave that to you. But I should rather call it between one gentleman and another."

Mr. Brooks' lip curled slightly.

"Go on," he said. "But say nothing that you are likely to repent."

"Thank you," said Kingdon. "Let me begin, then, by referring to our meeting on the steamer at Gibraltar. I had at that time, as you observed, a young lady under my protection—"

"Who was registered as your wife, or that of the alias which you assumed," broke in Brooks.

"I will not dispute you," said Dale, choking. "When I first saw you on the deck I pretended that you mistook my identity. You may guess I was not anxious to meet any person who knew me. A moment's reflection taught me that it was foolish to carry out the pretense, and I went to you frankly and admitted the deception. You know very well that I continued to pose as the husband of that lady during the voyage, and that we went ashore together. Now I want to ask this question: Would that fact in itself make my friendship a thing you would desire to end?"

The clock in the office ticked loudly while Mr. Brooks was forming his reply.

"In itself, no," he said, at last. "I do not pretend to supervise the morals of my acquaintances as regards a certain class of women."

Dale winced at the expression.

"But this lady with me was not a member of the class to which you refer," said he, quickly, annoyed that Margaret should rest even for a second under such an imputation.

"That makes me a little more doubtful as to what I should say to your first question," said the lawyer. "I should have to know the whole history of your acquaintance with her, and that, of course, I neither expect nor desire."

"You must understand this matter, as far as you hear it at all, exactly as it is," said Kingdon. "The lady to whom you were introduced as 'Mrs. Taylor' was as pure as an angel up to the day she and I landed at Gibraltar."

"I think you had best tell me no more—it can do no

good," interrupted the attorney, with great uneasiness of manner.

"It certainly will do much harm to leave my story at this point," was the reply. "At the risk of your final condemnation, I entreat you to hear me through."

Mr. Brooks, who had risen from his chair, resumed his seat, and put himself in the position of a listener, though without speaking.

"We were both violently in love," pursued Mr. Dale. "There was no deceit, no promises, no entreaties. I had told her that I was engaged to be married to a girl for whom I had not the least affection—"

"Good God!" cried Mr. Brooks, sharply.

"Which was true. To prolong the life of my dearly loved father, threatened by any resistance to his will, I had consented to have the ceremony performed, after telling both Mrs. Bruce and Ida that I should never let it be anything more than a meaningless string of words. But when I met the lady whom you saw, the first real passion of my heart sprang up and overwhelmed me. I saw that to carry out my promise in America was to condemn myself to a lifetime of misery, and I resolved at whatever cost to refuse.

"But when I related the circumstance to Margaret—to 'Mrs. Taylor,' I mean—she saw the matter in a light that I could not have expected. Admitting that she loved me, that I was dearer to her than all else, she declared that she would not step between me and the woman to whom I was engaged. She was an orphan, recently become so, and nearly penniless. She had no relations to whom she could go, and her future had not a single ray of sunlight in it, unless she became my wife. Still, no argument that I could make had any effect upon her. She might die, starve, find bread in somebody's

kitchen—but she would not take a sweetheart from another, even though the man swore that he would never have the marriage with that other woman performed.”

Mr. Brooks had become interested at last.

“A noble girl! A magnificent girl!” he cried, with enthusiasm.

“You are right, from a certain standpoint,” admitted Mr. Dale, sadly, “but the effect was as disastrous as could be conceived. Having determined that she could not, would not marry me—and that she never would love another—this strange girl lived as my wife for the next fortnight, under the specious reasoning that it would resign me, when I came to reflect, to parting with one who had violated the moral law and conventional usage of the world.”

“And you, ten times wiser than she, accepted this sacrifice!” said Brooks, with a frown.

“Accepted it? I loved that girl with all my soul. I could not bear the thought of losing her. I wanted to take her to America with me. I succeeded in getting her to make the voyage which she had sworn she would not take. She drew out of me a promise that when we reached New York I would find her a situation and leave her. This I intended to do; I meant to help her to earn an honest livelihood and then—to leave the rest to fate. But before we had been on shore an hour she eluded and escaped me. I have seen her since but once, and then only for an instant, from the window of a carriage.”

The trembling voice and dejected manner of Mr. Dale told but too plainly the sincerity of his statement.

“She deserted you without the least quarrel?” asked Mr. Brooks.

“When our relations were the happiest. I suppose

she was afraid that if she remained where I could see her I would not return to what she considered my 'duty,' and marry Miss Bruce. She preferred all the risks of life in a strange city, with a nearly empty purse, to leading me out of what seemed to her the 'right' path."

"Have you tried, seriously, to find her?"

Then Kingdon related the various means he had taken to gain information about Margaret, and told of seeing her face in the crowd as he went to the station with his bride, after he had come to believe her dead.

"You see now," he added, "why I wrote you from the Crawford House. And I think you are at least relieved from the impression that I wanted anything of you but what was decent and honorable."

Mr. Brooks bowed constrainedly.

"If you only wanted to see to her material needs," he said; "if there was no design on your part to resume your illicit relations, when you were married to another."

"That was all," replied Kingdon, in a depressed tone. "I do not know to-day but she is starving or suffering the cold of winter. I think sometimes that she has buried her sorrows beneath the waters of the Harbor. I awake at night with fearful dreams of her in deadly peril. All day she comes between me and my work at the office. The father for whom I married a woman whom I could not love only survived my wedding a few weeks. Can there be an unhappier human being in existence?"

The pale countenance of Sidney Brooks, that had been full of sympathy a moment before, clouded again at the question.

"Yes, there are at least two," he said, "quite as unhappy as you. One of them is the English girl you be-

trayed. The other," he hesitated a moment and then spoke clearer and louder, "is the wife you have taken to your empty heart."

A judge on the bench might have spoken in the same tone to a hardened criminal he was about to sentence.

"But," said Kingdon, overwhelmed, "I was hedged in. I planned nothing wrong. I had many an interview with my father in reference to his project for marrying me to the daughter of his neighbor, in each of which I showed my disinclination for the plan. To irritate him too far was, the doctors told me, to kill him. What you allude to as the 'betrayal' of the lady you saw on the steamer does not deserve that epithet. We drifted together like the streams of two rivulets which nature has intended to make into one river. All my sentiments toward her were of unutterable affection. I could not foresee that she would tear herself away, when she loved me so dearly. And when she was lost, and months of searching failed to find her, what could I do but carry out my father's wish, after I had told Ida and her mother the hollowness my professions would have at the altar, and they had positively refused to release me?"

The lawyer looked up quickly.

"You told them?" he said, interrogatively.

"Certainly. I said I had no heart to give."

Mr Dale reverted to the original theme, and asked the lawyer's advice as to what he should do now, under the circumstances.

"There's nothing you can do," said Brooks. "You have cut yourself off from the power to do anything."

"Well, after hearing my story, have you the same harsh feeling toward me that you had when you sent that letter to New Hampshire?"

"No; I have a different feeling, in which a certain amount of pity is mingled with regret at the general course you have adopted. But I am not your censor."

Mr. Dale looked distinctly relieved.

"I wish you would come and see us sometimes," he said. "It is pretty dull, naturally, when Ida and I are alone. Gordon Hayne calls regularly, and, of course, there are half a hundred other friends who come and go; but I'd like you to run around in an informal way. Confound it! I'd got to liking you immensely well, when that unlucky letter pushed us apart."

The lawyer mused for some seconds, and then said that he would come.

"And if I run across the English girl—what was it you called her, 'Mrs. Taylor'—I'll try to learn her whereabouts. I rely on your statement that you only want to see that she is provided for. Poor creature! I am sorry I did not understand the matter at first."

"It isn't likely that she bears that name now," said Kingdon, with a shiver. "Her real name—this is between a solicitor and his client, of course—is Margaret Rivers. But very probably, in her mad desire to escape me, she has adopted one different from either."

Mr. Dale rose. Then, as the lawyer touched his outstretched hand, he added, "I want to be your friend, Sidney. I want it very much. There's not another man living that I would have trusted with my story, and it's done me a world of good to relieve the terrible strain of carrying my secret."

CHAPTER XXII.

"WHOM DOES HE RESEMBLE?"

It was certainly quite an experience for Gordon Hayne to watch the course of Margaret Rivers' life during that winter. He was her only friend, for the people of the house to which he recommended her were paid liberally for all their attentions. "Mrs. Witham" had never been united in the bonds of matrimony to the individual who passed as her husband, but for all that she had many virtues, among which was a kindly heart, and she did everything she could for the unfortunate girl who had become her lodger. It was Hayne, however, who paid the bills, and this is, after all, the surest test of friendship.

He said to himself that he must be entertained, and that he could not have found so much for so little money anywhere else. But his intercourse with Miss Rivers could not help developing the softest parts of his nature, and an acquaintance which he had entered upon from the most questionable motives developed into a school for generous impulses.

When the baby was born he had a half-feeling of proprietorship in its tiny frame. He took it in his arms and rocked it in a chair, sometimes for five whole minutes. He had never paid attention to such mites before, and was interested in every detail of its development. He wondered if he could ever have been such a helpless, squirming bundle of cartilage. When it was ill with any of the slight complaints incidental to infancy, he walked

the floor uneasily, pierced by the least of its cries. There was in this young reprobate the making of a decent husband if he had only been taken in hand in time.

Margaret recovered rapidly. She had a good constitution, and the care which was given her prevented any backward step. Her mind was immensely relieved by the change in her surroundings, and, though the thought of Kingdon never left her, she was reconciled, in a dumb sort of way, to what she regarded as the inevitable. Never having heard anything about him, not supposing that he was within a hundred miles of her, she always pictured him as a benedict, reconciled to his wife and probably glad that his wild notion of marrying a friendless stranger had been frustrated. As to Mr. Hayne—who had after a while confided to her his real name—she could not understand his kindness, but she accepted it for what it appeared, thinking that “sufficient unto the day is the evil.”

A waif thrown to the waves cannot be too particular upon which shore she is cast.

The good feeling between Mr. Hayne and Sidney Brooks had never been broken, in spite of the veiled threats of the latter over the name of Mrs. Dale. Gordon bethought himself one day that it would be a jolly idea to take Sidney out to Dorchester and show him the mother and child there. Without saying in so many words that the baby was his own he could convey that impression, and divert the lawyer’s mind from Ida, who was still the direct object in all Gordon’s plans.

Margaret was an amusement of the hour; Ida was the passion of a lifetime. At least this is what Mr. Hayne believed in regard to his sentiments, and, as far as they influenced his conduct, it had the same effect as if it were true.

“I want you to come out in the suburbs with me and dine with some friends,” he said to Brooks. “You are so absorbed in business that you are getting to be a regular old foggy. You don’t go anywhere except to dry receptions, where nobody says anything they mean. Come with me to-morrow evening, and I will show you a novelty.”

Mr. Brooks answered that he did not shine in private houses, and he knew it. Who were these people whom he was asked to visit?

“Why, they’re only just plain, ordinary folks,” smiled Gordon. “There is a Mrs. Witham who runs the house, and sometimes a Mr. Witham, though he is not essential, and boarding with them is a Mrs. Taylor and her excessively new infant boy. You’ll get a simple table, a little conversation of a depth that needn’t frighten you and a view of a somewhat remarkable baby. It’ll be a change, and I shall consider it a favor. Come, don’t make it a matter for serious thinking. Just say you’ll go, and I’ll send word we’re coming.”

“But I’ve never met any of them—”

“That’s just the reason you are to go—so that you *will* meet them. I’ve talked about you times enough, and they’ve sent the warmest invitation to have you come. To-morrow evening, then, I will be at your office at five.”

This world is very, very small. I could tell a dozen stories in my own experience to prove that. A courier whom I once had in Algiers told me he had served an American family the previous year in that capacity, and had no doubt I would know them. Of course, I smiled at the idea, till he mentioned their name, when I found I knew them very well. At Grindelwald, a year ago, I heard a gentleman remark that he would give anything

for a recent Boston paper; and when I offered him a bundle I had just received, I discovered that he lived on the same street at home that I did. An Austrian who occupied a compartment with us in Germany, and who spoke perfect English, remarked that he had an American friend in London, a newspaper representative located there, and on the name being mentioned it was that of a particular friend of mine. The world is really very small.

When Mr. Brooks promised Kingdon Dale that he would speak to "Mrs. Taylor" if he ever encountered her, and ascertain if she was in need, he little thought that he would be asked by their mutual friend to go and dine with that person so soon. The name awakened no memories in his mind, the Taylor family being represented by so many thousands of people in all parts of the country.

All that Margaret knew in relation to his coming was that Mr. Hayne had promised to bring a gentleman friend to dinner, and had asked her to prepare her baby for exhibition to a bachelor, whom he wished to dazzle with its magnificence.

The young mother had been about the house for several weeks, and regained much of her natural and healthful appearance. To her comely face there was added the ineffable charm that motherhood brings even to the plainest of women, that sign of having partaken of the functions of deity in the all-glorious creation of a human soul. Mr. Hayne thought with elation of the impression she ought to make on his ascetic friend, and planned a most enjoyable evening.

Brooks paid but slight attention to Mrs. Witham, beyond the conventionalities, but when "Mrs. Taylor" came down he evinced the most remarkable emotion.

Margaret also showed plainly to the observant eyes of

Mr. Hayne that something unusual was the matter. It was evident to the most casual observer that it was not the first time these two had met. Neither of them was skilled in concealing their thoughts, and both were equally surprised at this meeting.

"Ah! You are old acquaintances!" exclaimed Gordon.

"We happened to cross the ocean on the same steamer," stammered Brooks, not at all sure that it was the best thing to say, but fearful that if she spoke first something even more embarrassing might develop.

"What!" cried Gordon. "The boat that Kingdon Dale came on! Well, that is a coincidence!" He reflected an instant on this theme, and then said, "You were aware, then, of poor Mr. Taylor's death during the voyage and of his burial at sea."

Through the somewhat slow mind of the lawyer there dawned the knowledge that the story which Mrs. Taylor had told to Hayne was not entirely a correct one. He would do well if he escaped getting mixed in her affairs, which, above all things, he desired to avoid.

"I am afraid we are entering on a painful subject," he said, constrainedly.

"Very painful," said Margaret, wiping away the tears that had sprung to her eyes. She was trembling, for she had learned that Mr. Hayne knew Kingdon.

Mr. Hayne wondered that he had not had more tact. Of course, the recollection of a husband's death and burial was the worst possible thing with which to begin an evening he had intended to be a pleasant one. The drops in Mrs. Taylor's eyes smote him with deep regret. He could have cursed himself for his lack of common sense.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with feeling. "It was

thoughtless of me. Ah, good-evening, Mr. Witham," he added, as that gentleman joined the party, much to his relief. "My friend, Mr. Brooks—Mr. Witham."

The lady of the house helped out the situation by assigning the seats. Margaret found herself next to Mr. Brooks, with Mr. Hayne exactly opposite. The dinner was served, and the conversation turned into more agreeable channels, Mr. Witham proving to be an interesting talker, and Mrs. Witham possessing the charm of a true hostess.

Of course, the strangeness of meeting the sweetheart of Mr. Dale in a house where she was known to his friend Hayne was too great to allow the matter to drop, even for a second, from the lawyer's mind. Had it not been for Kingdon's confession of a few days before, a confession made with all the marks of truth and in a manner that proved its sincerity, Brooks would have suspected that the husband of Ida Bruce was maintaining his mistress in this place, with Gordon's knowledge and connivance. If there was any reliance to be placed on testimony this suspicion must be dismissed at once.

But how had Hayne come to know her? Mr. Brooks knew the latter's reputation among women, and was ready to believe anything to his discredit in that line. It was clear that Margaret had told a story of the death of her "husband" at sea, which had no foundation. Brooks had been on the steamer and known that the only "Mr. Taylor" aboard was Dale. In fact, no person had died on the voyage.

And this young woman now had a child, a very young child, too. Whose child was it? Was its father some genuine Mr. Taylor—not a husband, of course, since Dale had declared her right name to be Margaret Rivers, and that she was unmarried? These were a thousand

things that might be true, if the evidence could only be obtained. At present the lawyer could not tell whether to regard the woman at his side as merely an unfortunate girl, misled by her too strong affections, or a deep, unscrupulous woman of whom it was wise to beware.

He believed he ought to ferret this matter to the bottom, if only in his own defense, and his legal mind set itself about the task, in his own slow, plodding, but sure way.

As to Margaret, she was very much agitated and well aware of the necessity of concealing her feelings. In the few words spoken she had learned that Mr. Dale was an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Hayne as well as of Mr. Brooks, and that in all probability he had no knowledge of her present whereabouts or that Gordon had ever seen her. In the vast area which the map showed her was called America she had felt it utterly improbable that she would ever hear mentioned the name of her lover. Yet here she was, dining with two of his friends, and for all she could see he might have been one of the party himself as easily as Mr. Brooks.

Her recent illness would account for any symptoms of ill-health which appeared during the progress of the meal, but she must be on the qui vive against surprises. It was a difficult task for a girl who had never in her life told but one untruth.

"Have you seen Kingdon lately?" was one of the questions which Gordon asked of the lawyer.

It often seems like a fatality when a subject that should be avoided gets into a conversation.

"Yes," was the reply. "He passed over an hour in my office the other day."

"His wife told me yesterday that you hadn't called on them since their marriage."

The attorney could not hide his confusion, but he always acted queerly when women were being discussed.

"I have been busy," he said. "But I am going—soon. I promised Kingdon that I would."

Mrs. Taylor was apparently listening to some remarks of Mrs. Witham's, but she heard every word that passed between the gentlemen. So her former lover was married and from all that appeared everything was well with him. A cold wave swept across her heart; not of sorrow, not of jealousy, but of icy pain. She had never realized quite so strongly as now the intensity of her love for him.

"You go there often, I suppose," was Mr. Brooks' next observation.

He wanted to judge from Gordon's manner whether he was more than usually interested in the Dale household. He talked freely before Mrs. Taylor, for he thought, as a matter of course, that the young merchant had hidden his real name from her.

"Not so very often," replied Hayne. "Kingdon is not the thoroughly likable fellow he used to be. I'm not criticising him," he continued, seeing the inquiring look on his friend's face. "He's had some trouble, I think, that makes him less companionable. He is absent-minded, as if he were thinking always of something far away. Why," the speaker looked at Mr. and Mrs. Witham, saw that they were engaged in conversation with Margaret, "he's been upset ever since he came from Europe."

"Indeed!" said the lawyer, absently.

"Yes," pursued Hayne, lowering his voice, but not enough to escape the ears most interested, "I saw him

in New York that very evening. I ran across him in the street, perfectly distraught, almost out of his head. He had eaten nothing since breakfast. I pulled him into a restaurant and put a little food and drink into him, but he only partially rallied. Really, I was afraid to trust him alone. I went to his hotel and stayed till morning, and after a while I persuaded him to go home to his invalid father. That was the only name to influence him with, for he worshipped the old gentleman. He's never been quite right since; and, of course, the death of his parent has not helped him any. I am going to advise him to see a doctor skilled in mental diseases."

Ordinarily Mr. Brooks would have declined to listen to these statements, for he detested gossip, but he was so interested in Mr. Dale's relations to the young woman at his side that he could not resist giving attention. Margaret, on her part, bore the infliction well, and managed, while not losing a word, to appear engrossed in some remarks which Mr. Witham was making.

Kingdon was not only married, then, but his father was dead! She knew well why he had wandered half demented about the avenues of New York on the night that she ran away from him. But time had brought things around. He had forgotten his mad infatuation in season to perform the solemn contract he had entered into with his fiancée. If he was still sad enough to attract the attention of his friends, he had at least done his duty. Margaret felt a glow of honest pride in the result of her terrible sacrifice.

"And now, Mr. Brooks wishes to see the crowning glory of this house," cried Gordon, gayly, when the party had left the table and adjourned to the parlor. "Mrs. Taylor, may we have the pleasure of showing him your youngest?"

The mother blushed, partly with pride and partly from the consciousness that the child's father was known to two of the gentlemen present, though, perhaps, suspected by only one.

"Would you really care to see him?" she asked of the lawyer. "He is very tiny yet, and—"

"The old excuse," laughed Gordon. "Mr. Brooks won't expect to see a giant in a month-old infant. Oh, we must have him brought down. There is no valid excuse for refusal."

Sidney thought, as Margaret disappeared, that perhaps the countenance of the child might give some clue to its parentage; but when the baby appeared he saw nothing in the chubby little face that could be used on the witness-stand. He felt drawn to the child, however, from the instant he got a view of it. A roly-poly bundle of human flesh, with dark eyes and clenched fists, this was the way it presented itself before his bachelor vision, and yet it was a potentiality whose existence might be of the utmost importance to the world.

"Whom does he resemble?" asked Gordon, much amused at the manner in which Mr. Brooks surveyed it. "Not his mamma, I think. Probably, being a boy, he is more like—"

He stopped before he had said "his father," for the pained look in Margaret's eyes told him he had again trespassed on feelings which were very tender.

"I don't think he looks like anybody yet," said Margaret, in a musical tone. "He looks just like himself, that's all."

"Which is quite enough," interposed Mrs. Witham, in a bit of womanly instinct. "He is the very best baby I ever saw," she added, to the gentlemen.

As young babies are best off in the quiet of their

nurseries, Mrs. Taylor soon disappeared with this one. When she returned she found that Messrs. Brooks and Hayne were about to depart, and only waiting to bid farewell to her.

She gave her hand to both gentlemen, to Mr. Brooks first. In the palm was a piece of paper, which, with the motion, she transferred from her hand to his. Usually slow to comprehend secret actions, the lawyer had sufficient presence of mind to retain the paper without revealing the transaction by his manner, and he slipped it into his coat pocket at the first opportunity.

As soon as possible after leaving his companion, he read the words penciled on the paper:

“My Dear Sir: You are a solicitor, and, I believe, an honest man. I wish to see you on important business, and shall try to come to your office within a few days. Please give no hint of this to any one, and do not write to me, as I have no correspondents, and a letter would attract attention. Yours,
M. T.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FACE IN THE ELEVATOR.

Mr. Brooks read this letter with mingled feelings. He had not cared to question Mr. Hayne as to the manner in which the latter made the acquaintance of the young mother, nor as to how long he had known her. It was certainly strange enough to discover her in the party with whom he had been invited to dine, when detectives had scoured the city, and Dale had wandered for nights together, according to his story, in a fruitless search. And here she was, not only in a pleasant home, instead of starving in some attic, but on the most friendly terms with a man who visited very often—much too often, Sidney thought—at Mr. Dale's residence.

There was still much of mystery left. Who paid the bills which, counting her recent trial, must have been substantial ones? If Mr. Hayne did, only one hypothesis could be entertained. Gordon was not noted as a philanthropist. Money did not leave his pocket without expectation of reward in some shape, at some time.

And if he did not pay, who did? Sidney was obliged to acknowledge, with a blush for his sex, that his indictment against Hayne would lie equally against most men whom he knew, under similar circumstances.

Mr. Brooks meditated a good while over the case. He took a deeper interest in Kingdon Dale than he could quite have explained. It had outraged his feelings when the young husband seemed to desire to be put in communication with a former paramour on the first week

of his honeymoon. Before he would consent to aid in locating Mrs. Taylor, Brooks, as will be remembered, had exacted a promise that the only use of any information obtained should be to assist her in material comforts, in the event of her being in need. Now he had seen Margaret, and found that she was not in want, if one could judge by her appearance. He wished to relieve Dale of all thoughts of her, for until this was accomplished he could never have tranquillity of mind. But if Kingdon ever discovered that she was living in the companionship of Gordon Hayne, what would happen?

The slow brain of the attorney kept at work on the problem, but he could make nothing satisfactory out of it.

The first fact worth knowing, of course, was whether Margaret was or was not the mistress of Mr. Hayne. Secondly, if this was not the situation, whose mistress she was, if anybody's? The lawyer read over again the note she had given him, stating her intention of calling within a few days at his office. He would take pains to see her there, and try what effect his inquiries might have.

Before Margaret came, however, Brooks received calls from both the men interested. Gordon laughed lightly when asked to talk about Mrs. Taylor, saying that he did not feel at liberty to discuss a lady in her absence. To an insinuation that he knew more than he would want to tell, he grew sober, and averred that his relations with her were of the purest. Then, throwing off his reticence, he confided the tale of their meeting to the lawyer, and the terms on which they were at the present time.

“What is to be the end?” asked Sidney, anxiously.

"Do you intend to go on forever, paying this lady's expenses and demanding no recompense?"

"I see you have imbibed the popular errors about me," said Gordon, with mock seriousness. "Can't I succor a young woman in distress and see her through a critical period, from common humanity, as you could, for instance? Must I intend to rob her of something in return for the loose change she has required? I am surprised that a legal mind should take so many ugly things for granted, when it cannot back them up by the slightest evidence."

"There is the proverb about the smoke and the fire," remarked Brooks.

"Yes, but there are people who see a great deal of smoke where there is none; and sometimes there is smoke from a fire under control, a fire that will never break loose."

Mr. Brooks paused to digest this idea.

"You believe in Mrs. Taylor, then?" he said. "She appears to you an honest, truthful woman?"

Mr. Hayne looked sharply at his companion.

"You speak as if you doubted it," he replied.

"I? I haven't had your opportunities to judge."

"Well, to give you a straightforward answer," said Hayne, "I do believe in her, implicitly. And I don't see how any one can be in her presence five minutes and raise such a question. You are getting to be a monomaniac, Sidney. Why, you have said things that from any one else I should consider insulting to—to Mrs. Dale."

The lawyer looked up, his face drawn and white.

"Never!" he cried, faintly. "The things I said were about you, not her. It is useless to deny that your reputation is bad; we might as well be plain. I only gave

you a warning that you must not try your arts on the—the wife of my friend.”

His voice sank almost to a whisper as he uttered the concluding words, and the listener saw that his agitation was of no common order.

“All that you say and think on that subject is nonsense,” said Gordon. “And, by the way, I did not suppose that Dale was any more your friend than he is mine. It occurs to me that it was I who introduced you to him.”

“Yes,” assented Brooks, absently. He was looking again across the parlor at Mrs. Bruce’s, and the only thing he could see was the beautiful daughter in her robe of white, with flowers in her hair. “Yes, it was you.”

Gordon had long held the opinion that Brooks was a crank, and that it was foolish to pay too much attention to some of his notions. But he wished to get this idea about Ida out of his head as soon as possible. He did not intend to let anybody get between him and a prize he coveted as he did that one.

When Mr. Hayne had gone Mr. Brooks rearranged his plans.

“I have obtained information of the lady you asked me to help you find,” he said bluntly, the next time Dale entered his office.

“Where is she?” cried the other, clasping his hands together. “Oh, tell me, tell me!”

The lawyer realized to the full the strength of the emotion that confronted him.

“I did not agree to do that,” he replied, slowly. “I only promised to see if she needed your assistance; and I have discovered that she does not.”

Dale’s strained attitude gave way to something like a collapse.

"Must I fear the worst?" he asked, gutturally. "Is she leading a life of infamy?"

"No. She has found friends—strong friends—and from all I can learn is in no present danger."

"Ah!" cried Dale, with a great sigh of relief. "Tell me who they are, that I may seek them, repay them and thank them on my knees!"

Brooks looked at the speaker with the strongest signs of displeasure.

"You have no right to thank them—no right to do anything about it," he said, vehemently. "You are married, to a pure, beautiful, charming woman, and your every thought should be given to her. This acquaintance with Mrs. Taylor, or Miss Rivers, or whatever you choose to call her, was a disreputable episode in your career, and the sooner it is forgotten the better!"

Dale was clearly staggered, but he rose to the emergency.

"There are men," he replied, with deep feeling, "who would consider your remarks sufficiently insulting to demand their retraction or cease all intercourse with you. But to me this matter is too important to be treated in an ordinary way. My intercourse with Margaret Rivers is the holiest thing I can look back upon in my entire life. I loved her—I still love her—with all the powers of my being. The marriage into which I was cajoled is the thing of which I am ashamed. The one act was at least honest, a true expression of the tenderest chords in my heart; the other is a lie from beginning to end, and can only result in eternal injury, both to me and an unhappy woman. You cannot make a marriage sacred which is entered upon as that was. Let me tell you, Sidney Brooks, that no sophistries will influence me in this affair. If there is a doubt as to my

duty to provide for any woman, it is against Ida. For I had the true, sincere love of Margaret before that senseless ceremony in which two liars perjured themselves to please their elders!"

The lawyer shrank before the impetuosity of his companion. The earnestness of Dale was altogether apparent. Brooks had never realized till to-day the full force of the passion that bound him.

"But," he stammered, "surely you were not both perjurers. Surely Ida was honest in declaring before God and man her love for you."

Dale shook his head.

"No. I had told her explicitly that I never could, never should love her. No woman's affection could survive the language I used. It was a desire to gratify her mother that forced her on, and the false pride of fearing to announce to the world that her engagement had been broken."

Brooks shook with the trepidation he was trying to conceal.

"Poor girl!" he exclaimed, speaking his thoughts unconsciously aloud.

"I agree with you," was the reply. "Her condition is, indeed, most deplorable. But she would still hesitate to take the only step that could better it, that of asking the law to untie the bonds that will gall her deeper and deeper as each year of her life comes and goes. We have made the most frightful mistake of which human beings are capable."

The lawyer was mute. The suggestion of divorce was too much for him.

"Tell me more of Margaret," pleaded Kingdon. "Is she well? Is she happy? Does she know that I am here

in Boston—that I am married? What are her feelings toward me?”

“I do not know why I should answer,” responded Brooks, stiffly. “You wanted to make sure that she was not suffering for food, clothing and shelter. I can assure you on those points. She does know that you are married, and, by your own story, she would not wish you to desert and betray your bride. I am sure that Miss Rivers would only escape you again if you discovered her whereabouts and forced yourself upon her.”

The deepest pain showed itself upon Kingdon Dale’s brow.

“I see you do not yet understand me,” he said. “Little as I revere the marriage bond that was secured in fraud, I shall be true to Ida until some power severs us. I shall either be again the husband of Margaret Rivers, or I shall never know the love of woman. I am in fair health. I am likely to live forty years, for all you can tell. Would you condemn me to a solitary existence when there is one who loves me and whom I love? You know where this woman is. By what canon of justice would you keep us apart?”

The thoughts of the attorney were wandering to the parlor at Mrs. Witham’s, where a young mother was exhibiting her babe with maternal pride. If it was this man’s babe there might be reason in what he said. And yet the difficulties of his position were great.

“I must think of this,” he said, slowly. “There are many things to consider. I will think of it, candidly and honestly, and let you know within a few days.”

Dale drew a long breath.

“A few hours would be torture,” he answered. “A few minutes would seem too long. A few days are an

eternity. But I have no choice. I cannot compel you to divulge the secret. I can only await your pleasure."

"I am placed in a position from which I would rather have escaped," said Brooks, after another pause. "An accident has made me the custodian of the secrets of several persons. It is my duty to act in the manner which I believe, on reflection, is most just."

As Kingdon knew, from a thorough acquaintance with the speaker, that it would be idle to attempt to influence him, he said no more, but left the office with the understanding that he would learn by mail when he was again wanted.

There was an elevator in the building, but as he was but two flights above the street, Kingdon started to walk down. The stairway circled about the elevator well, and as the lift was made of wrought iron he could easily see the persons inside as they passed him. What made him look into the interior is not clear, as it was something he was not in the habit of doing, but in making a turn in the stairway he glanced at the car moving rapidly upward, and saw a face that made him pause.

Margaret Rivers was in that car!

The elevator stopped at the floor above. As she was the only occupant it was tolerably probable that she had alighted there. The lift began to descend, and as it repassed him Kingdon saw that it was empty, except for the boy who guided it.

Margaret had alighted on the floor of Sidney Brooks' office.

Without doubt she had come to see him!

Mr. Dale's brain seethed with its thoughts. For the next few moments there was no possibility connected with this case that did not find an entrance to his brain.

The conviction that Brooks was playing him false

gradually drove out all others and usurped their place. Possessed with the information that Margaret had allowed one lover to be familiar with her, having her name and description for identification, Brooks had used these things for his own benefit! The intense interest which he had shown in the story, the emotion he had several times displayed, returned to the mind of Mr. Dale with full force. And here was Margaret visiting him at his office, with which she seemed familiar. The agonized man sat down upon the stairs, too weak to stand.

There was no honesty in men, where women were concerned—he had believed that for a very long time. Brooks had been over-anxious that Kingdon should remain true to his wife. He had shown trepidation when told how slender a thread bound her to her husband. He knew all about the present life of Miss Rivers, who was, to use his expression, in the hands of “friends—of strong friends.” It was practically certain, thought the half-crazed man, that the friends alluded to were simply and solely the lawyer himself.

There is nothing so unreasoning as Jealousy. The mind is clouded from the moment a dark suspicion takes root there.

Kingdon did not feel able to climb the stairs to the floor above. He thought it wiser to descend to the next landing and take the elevator back. Creeping slowly downward, he reached his destination after the lapse of several minutes, and when he had entered the ascending car he heard his name spoken by a familiar voice.

Gordon Hayne was at his side. They alighted at the same landing, that at which Miss Rivers had left the car.

“I guess we’re bound to the same place,” said Hayne, cheerily. “I’m going to call on Brooks.”

Then he noticed for the first time the distrait appearance of his friend, and asked the cause.

"Why, you're not looking right!" he said. "What under Heaven is the matter?"

After several ineffectual attempts to speak, Dale managed to say that he had just experienced a dizzy feeling, which had nearly overcome him.

"I should say so!" replied Gordon. "Why, you look almost as badly as you did that evening in New York! Lean on me, and I'll help you into Sidney's office, where you can lie down on a sofa."

Hesitating at first, lest he could not bear the shock of seeing his darling and his false friend together, Mr. Dale at last consented. It would be some comfort, he thought, to exhibit to his lost love the state into which her conduct had thrown him. As to intending harm to either of them, that did not enter his head. He was simply crushed and weak.

Brooks opened the door in person, and grew deathly white as he saw his visitors.

"Here; not that way!" he exclaimed, motioning them toward his public office instead of the private room in which Gordon remembered that a sofa was located.

"He is ill and faint," replied Hayne, "and must lie down."

Too confused to resist longer, the lawyer made way for the pair, and an instant later they stood in the presence of Miss Rivers.

Much can be done in a fraction of a second. Margaret saw the telegraphic message in the eyes of Mr. Hayne, which said as plainly as words, "Do not recognize me!"

"My friend has been taken suddenly ill," said Gordon, aloud, "and I advised him to come in here and lie

down. The lady will excuse us, I know, for intruding, under the circumstances."

Margaret bowed. She could not have spoken had she tried. Her body seemed petrified. Hayne thought she was doing wonderfully well. He did not want Kingdon to get an idea that he had ever met this lady before. Visiting so often at Mr. Dale's house, it would not be advisable for suspicions of this nature to find verification in the mind of the merchant.

Mr. Brooks felt that they were all standing on the edge of a volcano.

Dale submitted to being placed on the sofa, and drank from a glass of cold water which was brought to him. Following the mere instincts of her nature, Margaret took her handkerchief, wet it in the liquid and wiped his forehead tenderly.

"Perhaps it will be best to leave him somewhat alone," whispered the lawyer to Gordon, after a few moments, during which no one broke the silence. "We are going out into the other office," he added, in an equally low voice, to Miss Rivers. "You will stay a little while?" he concluded, interrogatively.

She answered by a slight inclination of her head, already bent above the sick man. The others then left the room.

"I will explain her presence here to your satisfaction at another time," said Brooks, in response to the question that beamed in his companion's face. "She arrived a few moments ago, and will not, I think, care to remain much longer."

Hayne nodded to show that he had nothing to say. He was capable of jealousy, too, but not of women with whom he had never been in love. And, besides, he held

an opinion of Brooks that precluded suspicion in such a case as this.

“I had nothing special to come up for,” he said, “and I think I’ll have to go. You’ll see to sending Dale home in a carriage, of course. He’s getting too many of these attacks. He’ll have to be more careful.”

The couple left alone in the private room remained¹ as they had been. Margaret continued to bathe Kingdon’s forehead, while his only action was to take her disengaged hand in his and press it to his lips.

True or untrue, he loved her! He could not blame her, whatever had happened. He only wished that he might die, then and there, with her hand in his and her soft touch upon his forehead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE LAWYER'S OFFICE.

The great problem still bore heavily upon Sidney Brooks' mind: Was it best to hold Dale to the marriage whose terms were so galling, whose results must be so painful to him, and to his wife? Kingdon's deep love for Margaret had shone forth in all its luminosity. Three-fourths of a year had failed to change him in any respect.

If Brooks could only hear what Ida had to say—could understand the real condition of her mind—it would be easier to decide. And then there was another to be reckoned with—Mrs. Bruce. It was not likely that she would consent to such a scandal as a judicial separation of her daughter from the man she had been at such pains to gain.

Until something definite was decided upon, it was clear that the couple he had left in his private room ought not to be too long together. Five minutes after Hayne left the office, Brooks knocked gently on the inner door, and, opening it, entered.

Mr. Dale lay where he had left him, and Miss Rivers had not changed her position. As a matter of fact, not a word had been exchanged between them.

"Are you feeling better?" asked the lawyer of the prostrate man.

"Much better," was the reply, and in proof of the statement, Kingdon rose to a sitting posture. "Sidney, there is no use in concealing anything from you. This is the woman whose husband I should have been."

Margaret started at the assertion, but, remembering that Mr. Brooks had had ample opportunity for knowing all this implied to be true, she made no reply.

"I have told you, many times," continued Mr. Dale, still addressing Mr. Brooks, "that there was one plain duty which I hoped to perform. I owe this woman a support. Nothing can be more certain than that. There are things about which she and I have differed, but I will leave it to you, as a fair-minded man, if there is any question about this one."

Then Margaret's voice was heard.

"May I go out with Mr. Brooks and speak to him alone for a moment?" she asked.

"Certainly. But please don't run away from me this time. I shall not try to control your movements, but there are things that must be settled; we shall never find a better opportunity."

She bowed acquiescence to this proposition, and quietly withdrew in company with the lawyer.

"You have told him—what?" she asked, when the door was closed.

"Only that I had seen you, and that you were apparently not in need."

"Nothing about Mr. Hayne?"

He shook his head.

"And—the baby; does he know?"

"Not from me. I believe he is ignorant of it."

She looked him earnestly in the face.

"I do not wish him to know," she said. "It would be harder to convince him that our relations should be ended forever."

"I will not tell him," said Brooks.

"Thank you. I came here to-day to see if you could think of any way I could earn my living. I have ac-

cepted too much aid from Mr. Hayne. He has acted the part of a gentleman to me, but I have a feeling of degradation in allowing one upon whom I have no claim to do so much. I am very well now, and willing to do anything honorable rather than eat the bread of dependence. Yes, Mr. Brooks, whatever you know of my past, whatever you may guess in relation to it, I want the rest of my life to be untarnished, if that can be accomplished."

He relapsed into one of his brown studies.

"Will you answer me a few questions?" he asked, finally.

"Anything."

"Were you an innocent girl when you met Mr. Dale?"

"As innocent as a child."

"How could you relinquish such a man?" asked he.

"Because I could not rob another woman. Because I felt what it would be to me if I had had his promise of marriage and she had stolen him away! I never killed even a fly, but I would follow such a woman to the end of the earth and drive a knife into her bosom!"

He shivered, for he knew she would do what she said.

"You have not changed your mind?" said he, interrogatively. "To-day if he would leave her for you—"

"I would not permit it."

"Or, if he were free?"

"If she were dead, perhaps I might find some excuse, for my love can never change, no matter how many years intervene."

He fixed another of his penetrating glances on her.

"Mr. Dale has a right to aid in your support," he said, then. "He has the right, and Gordon Hayne has none. As an attorney I advise you to accept what you need

hereafter from the father of your child. It is the best thing for you—and for him.”

Margaret struggled a moment with the proposition.

“But I cannot continue to meet him,” she said.

“No,” was the reply, “you will not need to meet him. If you both wish it, I will be your intermediary. He may leave the money with me, and I will give it to you.”

Mr. Dale was very uneasy during the absence of the pair, and when they returned he looked inquiringly from one to the other. Slowly and carefully Mr. Brooks told of the decision at which he had arrived. If Mr. Dale wished to contribute to the support of Miss Rivers, he would be the means by which the money was given to her.

At first Kingdon raved. Was he a dangerous animal, he asked, to be held at arms’ length by a woman who had sworn that she loved him? What harm could result if he met Margaret once or twice a month and put the sum he would give her into her own hands?

But gradually he grew calmer. It was something to know that she was safe, that neither the stifling factory nor the street could claim her. And at last he consented. It was better than nothing, for the present.

“I don’t want to be idle, as I told you when I agreed to come to America,” said Margaret. “There are plenty of ways in which I could earn almost enough to exist on. If Mr. Brooks would try to find me a situation—”

“You forget,” interrupted the lawyer, with the child in his mind, and then, perceiving that he was upon forbidden ground, stopped short.

“It can be done,” said Mr. Dale. “There is a vacancy at this moment in my counting-room; but I suppose that is the last place you would like to accept,” he added, regretfully.

"It is the last place she should accept," said the lawyer, gravely. "I will undertake to secure her a situation as soon as—as soon as it is expedient. I do not think," he continued, thoughtfully, "that there is anything more we can accomplish to-day."

He rose, and there was a strong hint to his callers that it was time to go.

"You'll see me sometimes, Margaret?" pleaded Mr. Dale, leaning toward her. "There is no reason why we should be enemies."

She put her arms about his neck before the attorney and kissed him gently on the forehead. The action was spasmodic, and not even Mr. Brooks had the heart to protest against it. Then Miss Rivers accompanied the lawyer to the elevator and descended, as he intended she should do, first. He did not know but Mr. Dale, in his excited mood, might follow her.

"Stay where you are for a few days," he said, as he left her. "Then come and see me again. But be very careful that Mr. Hayne does not know you come a second time. He might grow suspicious and make trouble. And keep your secrets, my child. If he should learn that your story about Mr. Taylor and his death at sea were untrue, there's no telling what turn his mind might take."

He was not thirty years of age, but he seemed so much her elder that the expression, "My child," touched her deeply.

"How can I thank you for your kindness?" she exclaimed. "You could not have used me better if I were a rich and powerful client."

"Hush!" he said. "Remember, be careful!"

When he reached his office again he found Mr. Dale

standing before a mirror, arranging his hair, which had been rumpled.

"I am calm," said he. "I have suffered so much already that I think I have learned to bear anything. Now, for Margaret's support, do what you think right and tell me the amount you expend. I have nothing to rely on but the income of my business, but I would sooner live on one meal a day than have her depend on charity."

He took his departure with only a few more words, for there was nothing to be gained by much speaking. When he was gone the lawyer locked his doors, to indicate that he had departed for the day, and sat by the drawn window curtains studying out the puzzling problem.

"I shall have to know his wife better before I can tell just what is best," he murmured, at the end of an hour. "If she is contented to lead the life of a maid while wearing the livery of a matron, that is one thing. If, on the contrary, her position galls and frets her; if she is dissatisfied and in distress, that is another. Dale is fearfully enamored of this English girl. Should he by any mischance learn of the child it would be hard to hold him.

"I must see the wife—I must see the wife," he repeated, with conviction.

CHAPTER XXV.

"IT'S NOT A CASE OF LOVE."

It had been a long time since Gordon Hayne began his task of winning the young wife of Kingdon Dale from her marital allegiance. His method was one which he called "slow but sure."

He had resolved to win Ida long before her marriage day was set, and, from all that he could judge, his chances of success had never been better. While not dreaming of the extent to which she lived apart from her husband, he knew that they were far from the condition of lovers.

Hayne had reason to believe that Ida liked him. He had done her, in the matter of the mortgage, a very great service. She had come to regard him in a most favorable light.

Mrs. Walden Bruce did not cut so much of a figure in these days as she would once have done. She was crushed by the troubles that had come upon her, and lived an absolutely quiet life in Newton, giving up the receptions she had held for so long, even declining all invitations sent by her large circle of friends. The unhappiness of the marriage she had so eagerly sought for her daughter was painfully apparent to her. Ida would not speak of it, avoiding skillfully every reference to the subject, but the maternal instinct was too strong to be deceived.

She had compelled her child to marry a man of the most moderate means, when a match with a millionaire

could have been just as easily arranged. A millionaire, too, who still felt the blow, and who would never, she was sure, recover from it. People might hint that the morals of Mr. Hayne were not what they should be. Mrs. Bruce had never heard an improper word from his lips. She knew that Ida could be trusted anywhere. If Gordon was permitted to call upon her still, it was a positive proof to the elder lady that his conduct was unexceptionable. She had brought her daughter up to know right from wrong, at least.

So Gordon continued to visit the Dales, both when Kingdon was at home and when he was absent. Sometimes Mrs. Bruce met him there, and always treated him with the same profound respect that he was at pains to show to her. She not only entertained no suspicions—she cordially approved of Ida's intimacy with him. There were possibilities to be considered; in case anything should happen to Kingdon, what more eligible opportunity for Ida to remarry than with this rich and agreeable gentleman. Although her plans had gone so badly, Mrs. Bruce could not help studying new ones and thinking of contingencies.

It was in the month of May that Mr. Hayne began to consider it time to bring his campaign to closer quarters. It is well said by the poet:

In the spring the young man's fancy
Lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Mr. Dale had gone to New York for a day or two on business. Mrs. Bruce was confined to her Newton home with a slight cold. Gordon had the prospect of a clear field for the number of hours he was likely to need.

He called in the morning, but only for a few minutes. He had been invited to dinner for that day, partly on

Kingdon's suggestion, just before the husband went away.

"Come in and dine with Ida, if you can," he had said. "Don't neglect the house, just because I happen to be out of it."

The lips and eyes of the young wife had cordially seconded the invitation, and Gordon had responded that he would try—that he believed it would be convenient. He reflected that a better opportunity could hardly come to him.

Ida served the dinner mainly with her own hands—she had but one servant—but this only added to its charm; he wanted to be alone with her as much as possible. When they left the table he knew that they would in all probability be undisturbed, and he sat down in the little parlor with a feeling that the curtain was about to rise on the first act of the long-deferred drama.

He had no definite plan, but kept himself ready for any move that circumstances might make feasible.

"You are dull to-night; what is the matter?" she said to him, when he had waited for her to break the silence.

"How can I help being dull?" he exclaimed, with a trace of bitterness. "What is there to make me gay?"

"That is hardly a compliment to my company," she responded, trying to laugh off his mood.

"Perhaps it is," he answered, meaningly. "But let us not talk about that. I may say things I shall be sorry for."

"Sometimes it is best to say what one has in mind," she replied, thoughtfully.

He roused himself.

"Do you tell me to say it—will you permit me?" he

asked, leaning toward her. "But, no! I cannot, I dare not!"

She extended a hand in his direction, with the intention of calming him. He took it in his own and pressed it gently, respectfully, reverently, to his cheek. Then he arose, took a few steps, returned and sat by her side on the sofa she was occupying.

"Ida," he said, impetuously, "there is a punishment that falls with terrible force on the head of a man who has neglected his opportunities. Once I loved a girl with all my soul! I love her yet; I always shall love her. I think sometimes that if I had had the courage at the right moment that girl might now be my wife! I believed I had no right to speak the words that burned in my bosom, and I waited until it was too late. Now I can only torment myself with the reflection of my folly, and fear that, after all, she is not the happy wife my sacrifice was intended to make her. Do you wonder that I am dull? It is a marvel that I have preserved my reason."

Mrs. Dale colored highly as she listened. She could not misunderstand the allusion.

"I believed it my duty," she said, firmly, "to obey the injunctions of my mother."

She did not possess his power to speak in riddles. What she had to say must be without equivocation.

"And she insisted on joining you to a man you did not love," he exclaimed, "because a few miserable acres of land lay side by side. For you do not love him, Ida! I have watched you, and I know you do not love him as a wife should love a husband."

Her thoughts were very deep at that moment. It was her first direct opportunity to unbosom herself to a real friend.

"No," she said, soberly, "I do not love him. There is no deceit between us. He does not care for me, either. We talked it over before the wedding day. He had his father to please."

He rose, and, walking to the rear of the sofa, leaned over her.

"Poor girl!" he exclaimed, with tears in his voice. "Poor girl!"

She allowed him to stroke her hair, which he took pains to cease doing of his own accord.

"Tell me one thing," he asked, drawing a long breath. "It can do no harm, now that the truth is being told. Would you have married me if I had dared to ask you?"

"I think I would have married any man my mother directed."

"Even though you were in love with another?"

She nodded, and a tear rolled down her cheek. He felt a fierce longing to press his lips upon the tiny drop, but he resisted. It was not a time to risk all by one premature movement. He took his silk handkerchief, instead, and touched it lightly to her eyes.

"Do you think a contract entered into in such a manner is binding, even if it wrecks two lives?" he asked, slowly, and with a tremble in his voice.

"There is no escape," she replied, with a gasp. "My mother is still living. My husband gives no indication of a willingness to release me. It is idle to indulge in fancies."

He drew a chair close to her, and threw all his power into what he said.

"There is such a thing as divorce. When two beings love each other oceans should not force them apart."

She shook her head, while her eyes fastened themselves on the carpet.

"One cannot get a divorce unless given cause," she whispered.

"A man who does not love his wife will give cause, sooner or later," he responded, with conviction.

She seemed frightened at the turn the conversation had taken, for she drew away from him and shut her lips tightly together.

"I ought not to talk of this with you," she said, shivering. "I have been learning to bear my cross. Don't tempt me to cast it aside, while there are others to suffer as well as I."

She had admitted that she wished release from her husband. She had not denied his intimation that she cared very much for another.

"Ida," he said, in his tenderest manner, "I would give the world to serve you. Your situation seems to me the most deplorable that can be conceived. At present you are, luckily, able to endure it. As the days pass your power in this respect will steadily wane. You are a magnificent woman, and a loveless union is more than any man has a right to ask. Let me assure you, if you need the assurance, that all I am, all I possess, is at your disposal. When the time comes that you can use me, say the word, though it be but as the cloak of Raleigh, to keep your shoe from soiling. May I hope that?"

She nodded, with her eyes full of tears.

Then he said he must be going, and she walked slowly with him to where his hat and cane had been left.

Mr. Hayne hailed a car and rode out to Dorchester, where he could divert his mind with the interesting woman and child who had been so long under his pro-

tection. He could pass an hour with them, and with their landlady, who was seldom dull in conversation.

But it was destined to be a disagreeable day with him all through. One of the first things he learned after meeting Margaret was that she intended to leave this home soon, and seek another at a distance.

"I am so glad to tell you," she explained, "that I have found old friends who will relieve you of my care. As soon as I can I am to go to another city, and shall not need your aid any more."

The blank look with which Mr. Hayne received this information banished the smile from the mother's face almost as soon as it came there.

"Some friends!" he repeated. "That explains your visit to Sidney Brooks. And so," as her telltale blush announced that his guess was correct, "you intend to desert me for the first man who will give you a lift?"

"But I have no claim upon you," replied Margaret, breathlessly, "and I thought you would be glad to know I would not need your help. You have been kindness itself, and I shall always be most grateful, but—"

"Oh, don't explain!" he broke in. "When are you going?"

His manner was so abrupt that Miss Rivers was much confused.

"In a few days," she said, stammeringly. "And, perhaps, after a little while, I can send you the amount you have expended for me. I have the account here." She took a little memorandum book from a drawer. "Here is every date and figure, from the first."

He felt inclined to laugh, as he thought how far the real sums varied from those she had been given. He was paying, for instance, \$20 a week to the Withams instead of the \$2 which she had been told was the price

of her rooms, the meals she had eaten having been at the "urgent request" of Mrs. W., who pleaded loneliness and lack of feminine companionship. Everything had gone wrong with him that day, and this was but on a par with the rest. Well, he had never counted this woman very highly in his plans. She amused him, and he did rather like the baby. Never mind. If she was going, she was going.

He did not like to talk with her in his present mood, so he descended to Mrs. Witham's part of the house, where he found that lady in her usual good spirits.

"Your lodger tells me she is going," he remarked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Witham, eyeing him inquiringly.

"Does she say where?"

"No. But I can find out, if you wish."

"Why the devil should I care?" he said, harshly. "I picked her out of the gutter, and she may fall back into it, for all of me."

Mrs. Witham was a shrewd judge of men.

"You do care, nevertheless," she said, good-naturedly. "If I knew all that is in your mind, I should know what to do in reference to a discovery I made to-day."

It is said that curiosity is a feminine trait, but I have noticed that some men are not free from it.

"There is nothing in my mind," he replied, "that will prevent my listening to anything you may have to say."

The woman eyed him closely.

"It isn't a case of love, I'm sure," she mused, aloud. "You're not in a mood to be jealous of anything that occurred before you knew Mrs. Taylor."

"I should say not," he snapped.

"And if I have made a chance discovery—which gives an acquaintance of yours away—a man who is supposed

to be above such things—you won't object to knowing it?"

He indicated that he would have no such objection.

She drew a number of pieces of letter paper from her pocket.

"Don't tell Witham I found these," she said, hesitatingly. "Say you picked them up yourself. They were in her waste-basket."

She laid the pieces upon a table, in their proper order, so that the writing could be followed closely. The first words were "My Dearest Margaret," and the last, "Yours Forever, Kingdon."

It was not a long letter, but it revealed all that Mr. Dale would least have liked Mr. Hayne to know, and the latter felt his heart throb against his bosom as he reflected on the weapon thus put into his hand.

"Isn't it an awful good joke?" exclaimed Mrs. Witham, holding her sides with laughter.

"The finest in the world," was the reply, as Gordon joined his merriment, however forced, to hers.

And he put the torn pieces of the letter in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"WHOSE CHILD IS THAT?"

Notwithstanding the mild manner in which Kingdon Dale had accepted the dictation of his friend, Mr. Brooks, in regard to the way his assistance should be given to Miss Rivers, he was far from content with the total separation from her in person that the plan involved. While at the lawyer's office he was not in a condition to make a protest against a scheme which, whatever else it did, restored to him the privilege of contributing to the support of the woman he loved. This he had at one time believed would almost satisfy him, for he had passed miserable months in dread of the awful alternatives of suicide and prostitution for the young and inexperienced stranger in a foreign land.

It is human nature to ask for all that can be obtained and to be pleased with as little as possible. Before Mr. Dale had left the lawyer's office an hour he regretted that he had not made a decided stand for a different arrangement.

Although he had seen her face to face, and felt the deliciousness of her soft touch on his forehead, she had disappeared as effectually as before. He went twice to Mr. Brooks, begging at least one more opportunity to talk with her. Sidney not only declined, representing that, as the lady's attorney, he had no right to grant this, but took occasion to lecture his friend upon the folly of reopening a chapter in his life which he had now the strongest reason to keep closed.

"No way is provided in the laws of the United States by which a man may have two wives," he said, curtly.

"But I have not even one," protested Kingdon. A spasm crossed the face of the listener.

"That is not true," he replied. "You have a lawful wife, and nothing but your excited fancy stands between you. The mistake was in the marriage, under these circumstances."

"But now it is done—now that the harm has happened to Ida and to me—is there nothing you can suggest except that we go on through life torturing each other by playing dog-in-the-manger? You have studied law and read the philosophers. Is there no remedy for us in all your books on the shelves there? By Heaven, I will find one before I am through!" he added, desperately.

To resolve to do a thing was, to Sidney Brooks, to put the resolve in operation. He did not move as quickly as some men, but in the long run he accomplished quite as much as many of more rapid motion.

He had been invited often enough to visit the Dales. He had, indeed, called once or twice, in a formal way, and had a brief talk with both of them of an evening. But always others were there, and he learned little or nothing of value to the emergency that now confronted him. Both husband and wife had conducted themselves in such a manner as to arouse no suspicion in the mind of any person not already conversant with the facts. Ida had great tact, and Kingdon a fair amount of common sense; and, with the exception of Mr. Brooks, no one knew the entire secret. No, not even Mrs. Bruce.

The lawyer selected an evening when Mr. Dale was to be from home. He wanted to talk with the wife alone.

He did not know exactly what he would say to her, and at best he was diffident with women. But to have the husband present would spoil all. Of that he was certain; the rest he trusted to chance.

When his card was brought in, Ida hastened to greet him. She had much esteem for Mr. Brooks, regarding him as one of the few thoroughly honest persons with whom she came in contact. From the first time they met she had liked him. She had a feeling as she took his hand that evening that he would be a real friend in case one was needed.

"Mr. Dale is out, I am sorry to say," she told him. "But that will not prevent your remaining, I trust."

He laid down his hat and cane where she indicated, and replied with his accustomed straightforwardness:

"I knew he was out, Mrs. Dale. I came *because* he was out."

The isolation of her married life, the great need of some one to confide in, gratitude that he had been so frank, with perhaps still other sentiments that had been growing in her breast unconsciously, swept Ida Dale off her feet, metaphorically speaking. Instead of relinquishing the hand she had taken, she held it tighter, and in a sort of convulsive clasp drew its owner so near that their garments touched.

"It is very kind of you to say this," she murmured, frightened at what she was doing, and at the same time unable to resist her impulses.

Mr. Brooks proved for once to be equal to the occasion. He took her other hand, and, with both of them now in his own, he held her there.

"I would do anything for you—anything!" he said, astonished at his own actions. "I—I am afraid—you are not happy."

A tear rolled down her cheek.

"You are right," she whispered.

And then she tried to say more and could not.

"Let us sit down," said he, "and talk about it."

Loosening her hold as if unwillingly, Ida followed the advice. She had done that which in the presence of any other man would have covered her with confusion, but his manner seemed to redeem everything. He had taken her warm hand in his and held it tightly, he had let her draw him to her and had drawn her to him in return, and yet she was quite safe. He was only going to "sit down and talk."

"What is the cause of your unhappiness?" was his next question.

His voice was as sweet and low as any woman's.

"My marriage," she answered, without hesitation.

"You are wedded to one man while you love another?"

She started at the statement, made so simply.

"I am married to a man whom I do not love and who does not love me."

He returned to the question, after the manner of lawyers.

"And there is another whom you would have married had you consulted your heart alone?"

"You surely do not expect me to admit that," she stammered, faintly.

"No. I will answer it for you. I know it is true. I have known it for a long time."

She touched his arm with her fingers, as gently as if it were brushed by the wing of a bird.

"How did you know?" she whispered.

"I cannot tell. I suppose it was instinct, for you have never uttered a word to me on the subject. I could

not speak to you about it, when your marriage was already decided upon. The problem was too great for me to solve. I could only remain silent, and resolve to shield you if I found anything venomous crawling across your path."

The woman shuddered.

"The things that crawl have no power to do me harm," she said, earnestly.

"Many a woman has thought that, and discovered her error," said Mr. Brooks. "The only safeguard is in the love of a true husband."

The loss, the terrible loss, that she had suffered, rolled over Ida's mind like a wave. The love of a true husband! What had she, what was she likely to have, to fill its place?

"I am in a delicate position," said Mr. Brooks, later in the evening. "There are many things I might say were not the atmosphere so clouded. Let us leave it this way: If there is anything in which I can help you, promise to call on me without hesitation."

"I will do so," she replied, fervently.

It was something to a woman who had so few persons on whom she could rely. She saw the tall form of the lawyer depart half an hour later with a sense of gratitude for his interest in her that passed the power of expression.

Mr. Dale's determination that he would find the whereabouts of Miss Rivers suffered no abatement as the weeks glided by. With that strange double consciousness which is often noted, he attended to his business in a manner that gave his associates no occasion for fault, while beneath the talk of spices and coffee the image of Margaret was ever clearly outlined.

He made a new arrangement with the firm of detectives, and a man was detailed to shadow both Mr. Brooks and his office at all hours. If Margaret had been to see the attorney once, she might come again; if she did not come, she might write; if she did neither, Brooks might go to meet her at some other place, possibly the very one in which she was living.

The vigilance of the spotter was at last rewarded. Miss Rivers entered the lawyer's office, and when she emerged was followed to a house in Cambridge, where she was domiciled.

Kingdon Dale did not hesitate long when he learned under which roof his idol was to be found. That very evening he took the street car from Boston and went to call upon her.

"I believe there is a lady rooming here," he said to the servant who answered his ring.

"Mrs. Rivers? Yes."

So she had resumed her own name!

"Tell her a gentleman wishes to see her."

The servant was gone several minutes. When she returned she said Mrs. Rivers wished to know the name of her caller.

Taking a blankbook from his pocket, Mr. Dale wrote a few words on a leaf and tore it out. "Give her this," he said.

He had written: "I must see you for a few minutes. Unless you utterly hate me, do not refuse this boon."

The messenger returned with the request that he walk upstairs. The lady he wished to see was in the rear room on the first floor. An instant later he had mounted the steps, and, not even pausing to knock, had opened the door and stood in the presence of his beloved.

When she received his note, and knew what she had

suspected at first, that it was Mr. Dale who was waiting, Margaret had been thrown into a state of excitement. Her first impulse was to decline to see him. Then she reflected that a man of his temperament could not be put off so easily—that having discovered her home he would insist on meeting her at all costs. She would have to let him in, notwithstanding the tacit agreement she had entered into with Mr. Brooks.

She was holding the baby in her arms when the message came, and for a few moments she contemplated various plans for disposing of that young gentleman until after the conference was ended. But, as she glanced about the room, she saw that there were many telltale proofs of his existence besides his own self. A crib stood by her bed; little garments were scattered here and there.

And then there came over the young mother an irresistible yearning to show this part of herself and of him to the long-absent father. She wanted to gaze into the eyes of her former lover when they first encountered those of his offspring.

So she met him, standing in the centre of the room, with the baby in her arms.

His astonishment was intense. For a few seconds he was fairly dazed by the spectacle.

It was her child; he did not for an instant doubt that. Something of the halo with which painters crown the Madonna hovers over the head of every young mother.

"Margaret!" he stammered. "Margaret!"

A thrill of delight shot through her bosom.

"Sit down," she said. "You did not know of this," she added, when he had been persuaded, though with difficulty, to accept the invitation to be seated. "I

thought it best to keep the information from you, but—”

His eyes were opened wide. The blood had sprung to every artery in his body. His face was suffused with color.

“Not—*mine!* Margaret, you do not mean—that it is—*mine!*”

That she did mean it—that she was overwhelmed at the insinuation that it could belong to any one else, was all too evident from the look in her face, from the gush of tears in her eyes. He fell on the floor at her feet, mother, father and child mixed in confusion.

“Mine!” he cried again, raising himself to look at the tiny thing. “*Mine!*”

She nodded through her tears, and did not resist when he caught her to his breast, to the imminent danger of the infant, and kissed her again and again on the lips.

“My wife!” he exclaimed, between each embrace. “My darling, darling wife!”

Slowly her senses returned, and she extricated herself from the heap.

“You must not call me that,” she said, sadly. “You are married, and the name of wife should be sacred to you.”

He laughed hysterically.

“I will never listen to such casuistry again,” he said. “You are the only wife I ever had, and your talk shall not divorce us. This boy—this girl—”

“Boy,” she interrupted.

“This boy is witness of which was my true marriage, and all the powers on earth shall not gainsay his evidence.”

Rivers of joy flowed over her at his words, but she would not give up so soon.

"You have married since I saw you; is it not true?" she asked.

"I went through a ceremony before a clergyman to prolong the life of my father," he admitted, "but there was no marriage. I have wedded but one woman, loved but one, been true to but one—and she is here now."

Thrown by the force of her affection on each wave of his impetuosity, the strong conscience in the English girl drove her back again to the shore of what she called justice.

"You have been living with her as your wife," she said. "That completes the action of the law and the church."

"I have lived under the same roof, but I am no bigamist. I married the woman I loved in Gibraltar, and I cannot wed again. I have a wife, dearest, and a child! They are here. All the sophistries in creation shall never make me doubt again where my duty lies."

Miss Rivers listened with palpitating heart.

"But legally you are hers," she replied. "She can claim you."

"Even there you need fear nothing," he said. "She does not wish to claim me. She was led into a mistaken step by a misguided view of filial devotion. She will be very willing to surrender a man who adds nothing to her happiness. I will give her the opportunity of seeking a divorce. The law that has chained her shall make her free."

He tried to kiss Margaret again, but she resisted him effectually.

"No, Kingdon," she said, "it is the old story once more. A woman who has loved you enough to take your name in marriage could not be willing to give you up. I would die of hunger rather than steal the love that be-

longs to another. You are hers. You are not mine. I have no right to you."

He was sobered, but not convinced. He took the baby in his arms and talked about him.

"I really believe he looks like me!" he continued. "What have you named him?"

"I have called him nothing but 'Baby' yet. He is so little."

"He is a giant!" was the reply.

He finally succeeded in making her say that he might call sometimes, and that the sum necessary for the support of her and his child should come direct through his hands.

"You will have to behave very nicely," she said. "No more hugging or kissing. And you must not come oftener than once a month."

This prohibition was at last reduced to once a week, with which he was fain to be content, for the present. He would trust to the future to curtail the limit to reasonable proportions.

It was a blissful evening that he passed, take it altogether. He had known nothing so happy since before that awful day when they landed together in New York and she deserted him at the hotel door.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IDA ROUSED TO ANGER.

The new address of Miss Rivers was soon communicated to Mr. Hayne by Mrs. Witham, who ascertained it from an expressman. Probably Margaret would not have refused to give it to him herself, had he asked her, for she felt the highest gratitude for all he had done in her behalf, and in parting she tried to give expression to her feelings by her most hearty thanks. But Gordon was in no mood to question her, or to accept her praises. He did not at the moment care where she was going. He thought in an indistinct way that her actions did not comport very well with her professions, but he was willing to end the incident. His mind was full of Ida Dale, and other matters took their places with things of minor interest.

When Mrs. Witham told him the street and number of the Cambridge house, however, he caught eagerly at the lever thus put into his hands. Worthless as it was in one sense, since he did not mean to visit Margaret in her new home, it might be very valuable in its effect when Ida knew that her husband had a former mistress so near Boston. The letter that had been pieced together revealed everything. It admitted the pecuniary support which Miss Rivers was receiving from Dale, and expressed the deepest grief that he could not occupy his "true position" as her natural protector in the eyes of the world. This letter might certainly have a value if used at the proper time.

Gordon's passion surprised him by its strength. There was nothing ephemeral about it. It grew with each passing hour, until it was the only thing that filled his mind. He would have Ida, if there was any way to accomplish it. No matter at what sacrifice of money or honor, he must possess this sweetest ornament of womanhood.

Everything convinced him that his progress was sure, if slow. Mrs. Dale regarded him as a friend. His presence at her apartments was always welcome. He was confidential with her almost to the degree of familiarity. She had confessed that her marriage was not happy. She had implied, at least, that she loved another, and who could that other be but himself? Brought up with Puritanic strictness, the idea of violating the laws of society must be brought into her mind with the greatest care.

During the very hours that Mr. Dale was meeting his love and his child in Cambridge, quite a different scene was being enacted at the flat in Boston. Mr. Hayne was making one of his afternoon calls, and was using every effort to bring his long quest to a close.

"You are sad again to-day," Ida said to him, when he had been in the house half an hour, and had replied in monosyllables to all her suggestions.

"There is no happiness in store for me," was his reply. "I am doomed to misery. Not only have I my own griefs to bear, but one I love is being deceived in the most cruel manner, and there is nothing I dare do to aid her."

She studied the statement for some seconds, and then asked him bluntly to explain.

"What good will it do?" he demanded. "No one blesses the bearer of evil tidings. Supposing I should

tell a woman that her husband was a robber and a murderer. She might leave him, but she would always associate me with her injury."

A robber and a murderer! That certainly could not refer to Kingdon.

"I never could understand riddles," Ida said, with a pout that made her look entrancing. "Why don't you speak out plainly. If you know anything that you ought to tell me, fear nothing. I hope I am sensible enough not to connect a friend who brings unpleasant news with the news itself."

He regarded her so intently that she flushed before his gaze.

"Shall I?" he asked, dreamily. "I ought to tell you, but is it wise?"

He took a package from the pocket of his coat, and held it thoughtfully in his hands. Then he slowly unwrapped it and exhibited two pieces of glass, on which fragments of a torn letter were pasted in such a manner that both sides could be easily read.

"No!" he exclaimed, as if strongly moved. "It is better that you do not read it."

Ida had seen at a glance that the writing was that of her husband, and her curiosity was aroused to the utmost. As Mr. Hayne had expected, she sprang to his side and endeavored to take the article from him, while he was in the pretended act of returning it to his pocket. There was a pretty little struggle, and then, as if out of pure gallantry, he surrendered, and the panes of glass were in her hands.

"It is cruel!" he said, with well-simulated emotion. "I cannot justify myself for letting you see this. But, after all, the fault is his. I will resist no more. Lay it

on the table, and see what your friend and mine is capable of doing."

With shaking fingers she did as suggested. Mr. Hayne assisted by laying the pieces in their proper order, and turning the pages when she had read to the foot of each. With palpitating heart the young wife read the lines which showed that her husband had a real, true affection for another woman; that the marriage bond which bound him to one he could never love were all that kept him from linking his life to her. And Mr. Hayne, having played his great card, watched the effect with eyes which he had attuned to sympathetic grief for her outraged feelings.

"My dear girl," he said, in a low tone, when she had reached the end for the second time—each word having been re-conned—"I am so sorry for you; but, after all, it was my duty to bring you this. Could anything be more heartless than his conduct?"

"Nothing," said Ida, blinking hard, and putting her hand blindly to her forehead. "How did you come in possession of this?"

He told her a carefully prepared story, how he had met Miss Rivers at the home of his friend in Dorchester; how a servant, recognizing the signature to the letter, had picked it out of a waste-basket and handed it to him as a "joke" on Mr. Dale; and how he had been shocked by the perfidy which its contents represented.

"I thought at first that I would show him what I had learned," added Hayne, "and demand that he terminate a double existence that is a crime to you and a shame to humanity. But his letter showed that the right alternative—that of giving up this woman—is too improbable to be hoped for. The language he uses in that note shows a perfect infatuation. Then I reflected that no

one can ever tell what a woman will do; that perhaps you would rather retain him, unfaithful though he be, than to have your name in the divorce column; that I had no right to interfere with your affairs, without putting you in possession of all the facts. And I brought the letter here to-day, doubtful if I should find courage to exhibit it, fearful lest the good turn I wanted to do you might be misconstrued and cause me to fall in the esteem of one whose high opinion I value above everything."

She sat listening with the air of one from whom all bodily strength had vanished. The blow had been very hard for her.

"We shall have to separate—Kingdon and I," she said, thoughtfully.

"But your mother?" he asked, significantly.

"I cannot consider her altogether," said Ida, calmly. "For her I made the error of my life. She has seen her mistake, and I do not think she will try to override my feelings again. If she does, I must oppose her. This is a matter that is vital. There are no two ways to take."

"There is one that many would think of," he said, leaning affectionately toward her. "A divorce makes a terrible scandal. However wronged, the wife is injured by the operation. When a husband has violated his vows, it is not always best to release him from the obligations he has assumed. That would be pleasing him too well, for as soon as the decree is pronounced he is free to spend the rest of his days with the one who shares his guilt."

Then, to Gordon's intense surprise, the young wife rose and turned upon him with a torrent of invective. She understood him at last.

"Beast!" she cried. "Coward! Wretch! How do you dare! How do you—"

The words choked in her throat. She was too angry for expression, but the convulsed lines in her face told their own story.

"Curse it!" he answered, rising. "You are a pretty woman to use this talk to me!"

A marvelous change had been wrought in both their faces. Hatred and repugnance struggled for the mastery where warm affection had sat so lately.

"Leave the house!" shouted Ida, pointing to the door. "And never, so long as you live, enter it again!"

Mr. Hayne laughed in her face, sneeringly.

"Pshaw!" said he. "You won't get rid of me so easily. I have treated you like a lady of refined feelings, and that was my mistake. You are not entitled to any such usage."

She looked at him as if he were a python into whose den she had inadvertently strayed.

The front door bell rang, and a guest was shown into the reception room, but in their excitement neither of them heard a sound.

He paused to catch his breath, and then said, "It is a sin that we should quarrel, Ida. You drove me mad with your coldness, when I have loved you half my life and would spill my heart's blood for you. Come to me now, give me the affection I crave, and no woman ever had a truer, more loyal friend than I will be to you."

He opened his arms and advanced toward her, but she retreated.

"Go, I tell you!" she cried, pointing to the door.

The door from the reception room opened silently. The tall form of Sidney Brooks entered. Mr. Hayne turned to ascertain the identity of the intruder. When

he saw Brooks he was even more confused than if it had been, indeed, the husband.

Pausing but an instant to recover her breath, Ida flew to the lawyer, and nestled, like a frightened bird to his side. She began to sob, and Mr. Hayne had a feeling that he could not well have exhibited himself in a more trying situation.

"What shall I do to him?" whispered the melodious voice of her rescuer.

"Oh, let him go! *Make* him go!" was the reply, in distressed tones.

The lawyer pointed toward the open door, without changing his position. With the arms of that lovely woman about his waist, he had no wish to move.

"I'll go, all right," snapped Hayne, drawing himself up. "Of course, you don't understand but half of this, or you'd see it in a different light. But there's one thing I will say, and that is, the mortgage on her property will be foreclosed at once. I'm not going to put a fortune in jeopardy for people who haven't the first symptom of gratitude."

"You need not go to any trouble on that matter," was the dispassionate answer of the lawyer, still without changing his attitude. "If you will send the papers to my office to-morrow I will pay you all that is due, principal and interest."

The promise was so unexpected, and so full of relief to the young wife, who had immediately thought of her stricken mother's prospective distress, that she unwound the arms that encircled the lawyer's waist and twined them, as far as her smaller height would permit, about his neck.

"Oh, that's it, eh!" exclaimed Hayne to Mrs. Dale. "Well, I wish you joy! The girl I told you of, who has

been Kingdon's darling, is also a particular friend of this high-minded fellow. I found her the other day in the private room at his office! It's getting complicated, isn't it?"

The form that clung to Mr. Brooks grew heavy upon him. The clinging hands slowly unclasped. The knees gave way, and Ida slid downward through his arms to the floor.

"Fiend!" cried the lawyer to Hayne, "I believe you have killed her!"

Aroused at last to a sense of decency, Gordon ran to the kitchen, where he acquainted the servant with the fact that her lady had fainted. The girl came in with remedies, and, thinking that it was best for him to go, the man who had precipitated all the trouble left the house.

Soon after Ida had been placed on a sofa and regained consciousness, Mrs. Bruce arrived. A brief explanation of the fact that her daughter had been suddenly overcome was what Mr. Brooks vouchsafed, for, above all, he did not wish her to guess what had happened. Before leaving he stooped for a moment over Ida, to express the hope that she would soon be all right, and she whispered so low that it reached no ears but his:

"Do not desert me, my friend—my only friend!"

"I will try to run in to-morrow," he said, the remark intended for both ladies. "I want to see you and Kingdon together, and you also, Mrs. Bruce. There has been a syndicate formed for building a boulevard through Newton, and they are ready to make a very handsome offer for a part of your lands there."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“THAT IS AMUSING, MY DEAR.”

The camel that succeeded in putting his head inside the tent of the proverbial Arab had little difficulty in introducing subsequently the whole of his body. The first visit of Mr. Dale to Miss Rivers, at her new home, broke the ice between them. Kingdon paid no attention to the limit of “once a week” that she had made to his calls, but was soon in the habit of running in daily, and spending an hour or more with his old sweetheart and her pretty child. Nothing was said about the matter to Mr. Brooks. The income that Mr. Dale allowed to Margaret still passed through the lawyer’s hands. Dale thought the easiest way the best, and did not care to disturb the new status quo, which had so many elements of delight to him after his long separation from the woman he loved.

As to Margaret, though troubled with doubts, she could not refuse to receive the man whose presence was of all things most delightful to her, and who conducted himself like a thorough gentleman, without ever offering to renew the love-making of the old time. She found excuses enough, arguing that no real harm was being done to the legal wife, concerning whom not a word of discussion was had between them. Mr. Dale devoted most of his stay on each occasion to the baby, basking in the presence of his infant son in a way that was touching in the extreme. He talked about him to Margaret, storing his mind with the lore of babyhood,

but for the most part the time was passed in a contented silence, except for such sounds as the child began to make, of satisfaction at seeing his new friend, whom he grew to expect and admire.

"Have you given him any name yet?" asked Dale one afternoon, when he had passed the usual happy time at play with the little fellow.

"Not—really," she replied, in some confusion. "I have thought of calling him Leonard, after my father, but he wants two names, I suppose, and the other one is still undecided.

He knew as well as if she had said so in plain words that she wished to make that other name "Kingdon," and hesitated on account of the peculiarities of the case.

"You might name him for the friend who took such good care of you before he was born," he suggested. "By the way, you never have told me anything about him; and perhaps you had rather not," he added, looking at her furtively.

Miss Rivers blushed.

"I have no right to tell you," she said. "He was a kind gentleman, who sympathized with my misfortune and treated me with the utmost consideration."

"An old man?" asked Kingdon, after a pause.

"No, a young man; and very good-looking; rich, too, he gave me to understand."

He digested the statement with a frown that he could not help.

"What do you suppose was his object?" he asked.

She waited some time before replying.

"If I must answer, and tell the whole truth," she said, at last, "I believe he meant to win my love, and wait for the time when I should manifest it toward him."

"And he did win some of it, I suppose," he said, dolefully. "You could hardly be impervious to so much kindness."

"He won my regard and gratitude," said Margaret.

"A single man, of course?"

She bowed.

"Single, young, handsome and rich. If you had not met me again, and he had asked you to marry him—"

"He would not have done that, I am sure," she interposed. "There was the—baby—in the way."

It was pathetic to think of! No matter what grand opportunities might come to this girl, the illegitimate child would raise an insuperable obstacle to her future.

"What is that ring on your wedding finger?" he demanded, noticing it, strangely enough, for the first time.

"I bought it in New York," she said. "It was necessary to pretend to be a wife. You understand? I told Mr.—this gentleman of whom we are speaking—that my husband died at sea on the passage over."

"I did not suppose you could invent such a big story as that," said Dale.

"It was not easy, but—it had to be done."

"Poor little girl!" he exclaimed, sympathetically.

"What a monster I must seem to you!"

She bade him "Hush!" Before he could say anything more a servant knocked and presented the card of a gentleman who, she said, was waiting below stairs.

An uncontrollable fit of jealousy, of curiosity, call it what you may, seized Mr. Dale at the moment. He took the card from the servant's hand and read the name upon it before Miss Rivers could stop him:

"GORDON HAYNE."

"Wait a minute at the door!" he said to the maid,

huskily, closing the portal. Then he turned and surveyed Margaret sternly.

"You know whose card this is," he asked, chokingly.

"Yes," she said, growing paler, but losing nothing of her firmness.

"It is that of the 'friend' who paid your bills for nearly a year?"

"Yes," she said, again.

"And he is still in the habit of calling to see you?"

"No. It is the first time since I moved. I did not think that he knew my address."

Was she lying again? Did she think it "necessary," as she had done in the matter of the wedding ring?

"Margaret," he said, "I don't disbelieve you, but I want you to prove this to me. I know this man, and I know that his reputation is of the worst. I have a right to warn you that his companionship is dangerous."

"He is a regular visitor at *your* house," she said, bridling a little.

"Yes, that is true," replied Dale, soberly. "How did you know?"

"I heard him speak of it to a guest he brought to the house where I was living. I know what you mean to insinuate."

Her mouth was drawn, her eyes distended, her figure in a tremble, as she uttered the disagreeable words.

"Margaret, my love!" he cried. "You do me injustice. But I ask just one favor. Let me conceal myself and hear what he has to say. I may fathom a man like that better than you. Give him a quarter of an hour, with no restraint on his tongue, and then make some excuse to end the interview. When he is gone I will tell you what I think and explain any doubt that may still be in your mind."

She would not have refused him had he asked that she place her head on a block and let him try the tenderness of her neck with an axe. She was only too glad to remove any doubts that he might have concerning her relations with Mr. Hayne. She threw open the door of her bedroom, and when he had passed the threshold she drew a screen across the entrance. Through this flimsy article the concealed man could not only hear but see. Then she spoke to the girl at the door and said she might show Mr. Hayne up.

It was the very day that Gordon had made the sad exhibition of himself with Mrs. Dale, which Mr. Brooks had luckily interrupted. On leaving the house the young man had gone forthwith to the address he had obtained from Mrs. Witham, hoping that a sight of the mother and her child might divert his attention from the ignominious failure of his long-cherished projects. On the way it occurred to him that, Ida being lost forever, it might not be a bad idea to cultivate the pretty English widow. It would not be a bad scheme to take her altogether from Mr. Dale as a revenge on a family toward whom he had begun to feel a wholesale enmity. Mrs. Taylor, or Miss Rivers, certainly must entertain a sentiment of gratitude toward him, a substantial basis from which to begin operations.

Banishing the cloud from his face as well as he could, Gordon met Margaret cordially, and soon felt quite at home in her little sitting-room.

"Where is the crowning glory of the establishment?" he asked, presently, looking about for the baby.

"He is asleep on the bed in the other room," she replied, in a low tone, "and we must be sure not to wake him."

"Does his father come often to see him?" he asked, abruptly, and then laughed at her evident discomfiture.

"I told you," she said, in a dignified way, "that Mr. Taylor died on the voyage from Gibraltar to New York."

"I know you did," he answered, sagely, "but a letter that you received at Mrs. Witham's, and which you foolishly tore up and threw into the waste-basket instead of the fire, tells another story."

To the consternation of Miss Rivers he drew out the letter as he spoke, pasted upon the panes of glass so as to be perfectly legible.

It did not occur to her to taunt him with being a spy, especially at this moment, when the author of those lines was hidden behind a screen within ten feet of him. She was much crestfallen, and stood, like a detected culprit, waiting for him to proceed.

"I don't blame you," he said, good-naturedly, "for your little falsehood. It was quite excusable, under the circumstances. But there is something that I ought to say seriously. Kingdon Dale has no right to assume the expense of your maintenance at this time. He is already too far behind in a financial way. Why, the mortgage on all his property is more than the whole thing is worth, and the interest is overdue. I ought to know, for I advanced money to try to save him, and I shall have to foreclose this week to keep from losing what I have invested."

The young woman trembled as she listened, and presently sought a chair, into which she sank dizzily. Was she aiding, after all, in the ruin of the man she loved so well? There was something in the manner of Mr. Hayne which convinced her that there was a foundation to his story. And she pitied Kingdon with all her heart,

knowing that not a word which had been spoken had escaped him.

"Now, my dear," pursued Hayne, "I have sought you to-day to propose a more sensible arrangement than the one under which you are living. I will furnish you a handsome house and put at your disposal a sum that will supply all the wants of yourself and the little one. I will use you like a lady, and in return you will treat me like a genuine friend. All care for your future will vanish. What do you say?"

Margaret wondered if the answer she was about to make would seem to the watcher behind the screen dictated by the knowledge of his presence there.

"I wish you would withdraw the question," she answered, in a hushed tone. "I cannot treat it seriously, when I remember that this is the first time you have said anything to bring a blush to my cheek."

He laughed aloud.

"That is amusing, my dear," he said, "when one remembers the experience through which you have already passed. Unless you accept my offer, what will you do?"

Her heart was beating rapidly, partly out of pity for the desperate case of Mr. Dale, till then unsuspected by her.

"I do not know," she answered, quietly. "I have been ready once before to meet death, if necessary, and I should not shrink from it again."

Hayne began to fear that he was to be beaten for the second time that day, and in a quarter where he had least expected a rebuff.

"Well, you have made a nice mess for your lover!" he replied, coarsely. "His wife will soon have him in court, with your name as co-respondent."

"His wife!" cried Margaret. "She does not know of my existence!"

"She did not yesterday. To-day she has seen the letter he wrote you. Yes, I showed it to her," he added, in response to her questioning eyes.

"You? Why did you do that?"

"Because I chose. I am like you; I do things because it pleases me. She wants a divorce, and she has a right to one."

"But the letter," said Margaret, vaguely, "does not refer to anything that has happened since her marriage. I have never wronged her in thought or deed since that day."

He laughed again, discordantly.

"The law does not need actual proof," he said. "The letter shows that Kingdon Dale, a married man, writes to a woman not his wife, protesting the most violent love for her. If, in addition to that, it is proved that he visits this woman" (he said this as a "feeler" and her start convinced him of the correctness of his guess) "the judge will take the rest for granted."

She tried to grasp at every possible straw.

"But Mrs. Dale would not wish a separation!" she said. "She could not!"

"Another error of yours," he smiled, bitterly. "She is in love with another person herself."

The screen was thrown to the floor with a crash, and Kingdon Dale, trembling with anger, stepped over it into the room.

"*Liar!*" he shouted, raising his arm threateningly at the astonished man.

Miss Rivers threw herself between them.

"Kingdon," she said, "*think*—think of all he did for

me! Mr. Hayne," she added, in tones of entreaty, "there must be no quarrel between you here."

"Retract what you said," was Mr. Dale's answer to Hayne. "You have calumniated a pure and virtuous woman."

"I retract it," said Hayne. "I do so to avoid a disagreeable scene for this lady, who, of all the people I have ever helped, is the only one to exhibit the least symptom of gratitude. I was betrayed into saying more than I meant. Hereafter watch your own household, if you have time enough from your outside affairs."

So saying, he took his hat, waved an ironical good-bye to Dale, cast a look of regretful farewell at Margaret, and left the house.

The pair that remained looked at each other for some seconds in silence.

"You believe me now," said Margaret, after a while. "You believe my words and acts consistent with the honor of your child's mother?"

"Oh, yes!" he replied, with a deep sigh. "But about Ida! Could there have been anything to his assertion?"

Miss Rivers cast down her eyes.

"You love her, after all, I see," she murmured, clasping her hands over her bosom.

"No! I tell you, no! But I do not want harm to come to her. She is unhappy enough now. If some villain has dared—"

Margaret caught him by the sleeve.

"Go home to her," she said. "Forget all that is past. Remember your duty to guard her. Give no man occasion to insult her. Go, Kingdon, go, and think of me no more!"

He cried out with pain, saying she was mad—that no woman but her would ever claim his love and devotion.

She then alluded to what Mr. Hayne had said about his finances, and declared that she would accept nothing which made it hard for him to fulfill his legitimate obligations.

He explained for answer the matter of the Newton lands, saying that even if they were entirely lost it would not affect his capacity to earn a living, both for Ida and for her. In an hour he persuaded her to promise that she would for the present remain where she was and trust him.

“And if that fellow Hayne returns,” he said—

“I will give orders not to let him in. And yet, let us remember always how very kind he was to me so long!”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TWO WIVES MEET.

There are many men who are capable, under the influence of passion or anger, of committing disreputable acts, and who are, nevertheless, thoroughly ashamed of their conduct as soon as their pulses have had time to cool. When Gordon Hayne reflected on the manner in which he had spent that day he was extremely disgusted with himself. He felt that he had played the part of a coward and a knave, and that two of the best friends he had ever possessed were lost to him forever.

That night he wrote three letters. One was to Mr. Dale, retracting explicitly the charge he had made against his wife. One was to Mr. Brooks, begging him to say nothing of the unhappy situation in which he had found Gordon, and expressing the deepest regret at the occurrence. And the third was to Ida, bidding her farewell, asking her to forget the insane freak that had guided him, and assuring her that as far as the Newton land was concerned the principal could remain for years, if need be, and that the interest was a matter of no account whatever.

He sent the three letters, and then began to wonder whether they would do any good. He knew that Dale and his wife were badly mismatched; that Kingdon had a love for Miss Rivers which he was not likely to outgrow; that Brooks, hide it as he might, would give his very life for Ida, and that Mrs. Dale, only recently aware of it, cared more for Sidney than she had ever cared for

any other person. A rearrangement of the ties of those four people could hardly fail to be of benefit to all, if it could be accomplished.

The more he thought about it, the more he wished that he had back the letters that he had deposited in the mail box. He had written them unselfishly, but without due consideration. He would have to see more of these people in person, in order to right things. The one most likely to receive him politely was Margaret. He made up his mind that he would have another and a far different interview with her.

Mrs. Dale met her husband on the evening of her encounter with Hayne in much the usual way. He was absorbed in the events of the day, and more absent-minded than ordinarily. He knew, it is true, that Gordon had probably shown Ida the torn pieces of the letter, but it was not for the husband to begin a conversation that related to that matter. He believed it would not be Ida, either, who would open the subject. As for the charge against his wife, his opinion was voiced in the exclamation with which he had met it, "Liar!"

The married existence of this couple was not sufficiently intimate to lead to much conversation. The dinner was usually partaken of in comparative silence. The evening paper took up Dale's time after that until callers appeared or he took his stroll downtown. At bedtime they occupied separate apartments, not even very near each other.

The day passed, and neither said the slightest thing in reference to what was on both minds. But Ida was not idle. She had made up her mind as to the course she would adopt. She meant to watch her husband, and find whether he went to the house where his "dearest

Margaret "lived; and if he did so, she determined to follow him.

A shrewd woman does not necessarily need the services of a detective to carry out a plan of this kind. A man who has no reason to think that he is watched and no particular fear of discovery, may be tracked with ease. Ida took a car to the neighborhood of her husband's office, at that part of the afternoon when she thought him most likely to leave business. She waited patiently till he came out, and then followed at a respectable distance. He walked to Bowdoin square, and took the first car that went to Cambridge. She took the second, and alighted a minute later. Mr. Dale walked rapidly toward the house where Miss Rivers lived, never once turning his head. His wife followed in his wake, and in a few moments saw him enter a residence that she had no reason to doubt was the one of which she was in search.

Now, for the first time, she hesitated. She had learned nothing of Margaret but her given name. What was to meet her the other side of that door she had only a faint idea. She was not over strong. She dreaded nothing more than a collision—with Kingdon or any one else. But one thing was perfectly plain. She must try to see the woman he loved, and, better than all else, when he was with her.

Summoning her courage, Ida at last went to the bell and rang it.

"I wish to see a lady who boards here," she stammered, to the servant.

"Miss Rivers?"

"Yes."

She might be wrong. It was possible that there were two ladies boarding at the house, but she must run that risk.

"Will you give me your card?"

That course would be suicidal.

"It would be useless," said Mrs. Dale. "She has never met me. Say it is a lady who has important business, and must see her alone."

Showing Mrs. Dale into a parlor, the domestic vanished on her errand. The description given convinced Mr. Dale at once of the identity of the caller.

"It is my wife!" he whispered, growing pale.

"Show her up at once," said Margaret, firmly.

"Are you insane!" he cried, as the servant disappeared.

"I shall see her," she responded, in a tone that left no room for doubt. "You must step into that bedroom and close the door."

"But—the baby?" he said, glancing with apprehension at the child in its crib.

"I shall leave him where he is. This is a critical moment, Kingdon. You have assured me that your wife does not love you; that there is no attachment between you such as should accompany the marriage tie. If that is so, nothing she will learn here will trouble us or her."

"Ah! You disbelieve me!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands together.

"No. I believe you, and I love you. But until I speak with this lady I shall never know exactly what my duty is."

There was a faint knock on the door, and as he stepped into the inner room, Margaret opened it to her visitor.

"Miss Rivers?" said Ida. "Miss Margaret Rivers?"

She was very white and short of breath.

"Yes," responded Margaret. "Come in. Take this

chair." She handed her a rocker, into which Ida sank. "And your name, I believe, is Mrs. Dale."

Surprised, Ida responded in the affirmative, and then there was a moment of silence, during which the tears slowly filled Mrs. Dale's eyes and began to overflow.

"I have come to beg your pardon," she said, in a shaking voice, when she had partially recovered.

"My pardon!" echoed the listener.

"Yes." She glanced about the room, and her eyes lit, for the first time, on the sleeping baby. "Oh!" she cried, with a gasp. "Is it his child? But, of course it is. I can see his very features. I came," she continued, jerkily, "to ask you to forgive me; but I fear you never, never can."

For answer Miss Rivers threw herself on the floor at the feet of her caller and clasped her hands about her knees. Ida leaned over and kissed her repeatedly on her dark hair.

"Oh, you make me so ashamed!" cried Margaret. "But you must hear my story. You shall not condemn me utterly until you know all."

Ida stroked the dark tresses and bade the suppliant figure rise.

"I do not condemn you," she said, soothingly. "I only condemn myself. You loved him, with all your heart, I am sure; and I was only trying to satisfy my mother. You are a holy being. That beautiful child sets the seal of glory on your forehead. Tell me, did you love him very, very much?"

A gush of tears was her only answer. Miss Rivers was too much overcome to make a verbal reply at that time.

"How can I ask such a senseless question?" pursued Mrs. Dale. "You loved him; this mite of humanity tells that without equivocation. He loved you, too, and

had it not been for the promise extracted from him he would have been to-day what he should be, your true and lawful husband. I was an ignorant girl. I adore my mother. I did what she bade me, with her assurance that it would come out right in time. But it never has, and it never will come out right. We are living the meanest of lies before the world. He is not my husband, I am not his wife. We are a curse to each other, though I must say, in justice to him, that he warned me explicitly in advance. I know what the world would say, but to me your union with him is a thousand times more honorable than mine. He has a noble heart, and unwittingly I tried to crush it. I did not know, I could not understand. If I had dreamed that I was robbing you, my dear girl, and had known of that cherub, my duty would have been plainer."

Miss Rivers was at last persuaded to rise, but she would not sit down.

"I am so ashamed before you," she said, when she could speak, "that I do not know what to say. But you shall have him back. You are the noblest woman I ever knew. I want to tell you all about it. Yes, you must hear me. I beg it as a great favor. I learned to love Mr. Dale before I heard of your existence. We were traveling together—and—my father—died. I had no other friend to look to. One day he told me—I know he would let me say this—that he loved me. My heart gave a great leap of joy. A future seemed to open of the most surpassing brightness. Then he began to speak of his engagement to a lady in America, and I refused, absolutely, to allow him to say anything more of his affection for me. I told him he must return to America and carry out his promise to you. I refused, though it should break my heart, to steal him from another wo-

man, for I thought no sin could equal that. It seemed settled that we were to part at Gibraltar—that he would return to you, and that I should bury my sorrow as best I might among strangers. Oh! I was so hungry for love, I coveted so dearly the sweetness of his presence.

“Let me tell you everything. There is only a little more. I came to America with him, under an agreement to separate when we arrived, and as soon as I could I ran away from him, friendless and penniless in a strange land. I meant—oh! I swear it to you!—to banish him from my life forever, but an accident brought us together again. And, there is one thing more, when I learned that he had been married I hid my home from him till he discovered it himself; and never, no, not once, has he acted since then in any manner that my dear mother in heaven might not have looked down upon without a blush on her angel face!”

The tears of the two women mingled, their arms around each other's neck.

“You shall have him entirely now,” said Mrs. Dale, when she had regained a little of her composure. “Poor girl! You have suffered enough.”

Margaret shook her head.

“No. He is yours,” she replied. “I have done wrong to let him call here; but—but, there was the—” She pointed to the crib, whose little occupant began to show signs of wakefulness.”

“Let us call Mr. Dale, and get his opinion,” said Ida, finally. She pointed to the inner door. “He is there, of course. I saw him enter the house.”

Margaret was startled at this cool mention of a secret that she had been in a tremble about ever since her visitor entered. But she did not know how to better

things by stopping Ida when the latter walked to the bedroom door and threw it open.

"Kingdon," she said, gently, "come here and help us."

Mr. Dale emerged, with a clouded brow. He was much in fear of the outcome of an interview between these two women, and as he came into their presence he looked anxiously from one to the other.

"This is your true wife," said Ida, indicating Miss Rivers. "Both she and her lovely child have the highest claim upon you. I seem in their presence a mere interloper, and I want you to promise to set them right."

"Do not listen!" cried Margaret, wildly. "It is I who have committed the fault. Her claim is as strong as duty and law. Kingdon," she addressed him impressively, "we must say good-bye. Our later meetings have been a mistake. When a man is married he should forget everything that comes between him and his wife."

Mrs. Dale interrupted.

"Answer one question," she said, to her husband. "What woman do you love best in all the world?"

He turned his face to her, with set lips.

"Ida," said he, "you have asked me an honest question and I will make an honest reply. For you I have the friendship of my youth, the esteem of a neighbor, the sympathy of an old associate. For Margaret I have the passionate longing of a lover. My child lies there in its cradle. During all my life I have had such feelings for no other woman. Right or wrong, I shall love her till the end."

Miss Rivers essayed to stop the flow of his impassioned words, but her effort was of no avail. Mrs. Dale smiled angelically, and, now, perfectly calm, took the hand of the English girl and placed it in that of her husband.

"God hath joined you," she said. "Neither man nor woman should put you asunder."

She reached down and lifted the babe from its cradle. With wide-open eyes the little fellow crowed joyfully, and put out his arms for Margaret, who took him and let him nestle against her bosom.

"There are things necessary for right procedure in human society," continued Mrs. Dale, deliberately. "Kingdon, you must get a divorce, or allow me to do so. The most polite reason to allege is desertion. You are going to New York soon, I hear, on business. When you take your trunks from the flat where we live you must never return there. After a certain time the court can be asked to remedy our fearful error. Then you will let the law do what it should have done long ago, and begin life again with the woman you love and the child who has a right to your care and fatherly oversight. As for me," she added, in a lower voice, "do not think I shall regret the step. It is never too late to do right. You know very well, Kingdon, that I have never been in love with you. For your kindness, your consideration, both to me and my poor mamma, I shall bless you always. It is better for all that this separation take a legal and permanent form. My greatest wish is that you may be happy with this dear girl. Do not speak, please, till I am gone. Good-bye."

She took Margaret's cheeks between her hands and pressed three warm kisses on her forehead. Then Miss Rivers cried out:

"Angel, saint! How can I accept such a great boon from you?"

"Fear nothing," replied Mrs. Dale. "It may prove a boon to me as well. If this rearrangement comes a little late, it may bring happiness, nevertheless."

She touched the child, still nestling in his mother's arms.

"May I kiss him?" she asked.

Margaret lifted him up to her, and a warm caress was imprinted on the little cheek.

"What is his name?"

"I—I have not named him, yet," said Margaret.

"Call him Kingdon. It will please me very much. And, some day, if you have the happiness to have a girl child, call her Ida. I shall think it the highest of compliments. Now, good-bye. Don't try to stop me. Kingdon, be good to this dear little woman, and thank God that He gave you such a treasure."

She was gone. The baby looked after her, wondering what had become of the blonde head that made such a light in the room. Margaret fell on her knees by the chair in which Ida had sat, sprinkling it with her tears. And Kingdon Dale, his heart full of gratitude, buried his face in his hands and wept also.

CHAPTER XXX.

"WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TO LOVE ME?"

There was business for Mr. Dale in New York, and it was the desire of his firm that he should spend as much time there hereafter as possible. The necessity of absentsing himself from his wife brought this duty at an opportune time. He made arrangements to give up his residence in Boston, doing all of those petty and disagreeable things which the law demands of a man who ceases to fill the position of a husband with a view to final separation under the seal of a court. He notified his landlord, for one thing, that he should surrender his flat on a given date. Ida packed up and went to live again in Newton, with her mother. To Mrs. Bruce's inquiries the young wife returned the briefest replies.

"I have taken your advice once in these matters, mamma, and made a great failure of it. This time I must act on my own judgment. Kingdon and I have not quarreled. We are never going to live together again, that's all. Don't talk to me about it, or on any account to any one else."

And poor, crushed Mrs. Bruce fell into the plan, for want of anything else to do. This little daughter of hers had suddenly become the bigger woman in strength of mind.

"We shall all be happy, mamma, by and by," said Ida, soothingly. "Wait, have patience, and you will see."

While anxious to preserve appearances, Mr. Dale was not willing to be separated entirely from his Margaret

and his child. They removed to one of the suburbs of New York, where he visited them at regular intervals. There was a long time to wait, according to the Massachusetts laws, quite three years, and he thought this no more than he had a right to do.

For several months Margaret argued the matter over with him every time he called. She had no right, she said, to take him from that lovely woman who had offered her such kindness. But one day, after a trip to Boston, he whispered something in her ear that made her start.

"Oh, if you are certain of that!" she exclaimed. "It would make me feel so much better about it. Are you sure there is no doubt?"

Things began to resume the even tenor of their way. During the succeeding year two events worth recording came to the people in whom the reader is interested. One was the sale to the Newton Boulevard Company of a considerable portion of the land owned by Mr. and Mrs. Dale. The sale did not in either case include the homes, nor the nearest land about them. Mr. Brooks negotiated the transaction, and at the request of the owners paid off the mortgage held by Gordon Hayne.

"I'll have to take the money, I suppose," said Hayne, "but I'd much rather let it lie. Of course, the security was ample." Then he added, to himself, "I'll write to Ida, and try to square myself. Kingdon doesn't come home any more, they say. The most I can expect now is to regain a little of her good opinion; and much good that will do me, confound it!"

There was over a hundred thousand dollars left out of the sale after settling the indebtedness, and Mr. Brooks wrote to Mr. Dale a formal, business letter, asking what he should do with it.

"Give it to Ida," was Kingdon's reply. "She will need it."

Then Mr. Brooks wrote to Ida, asking the same question.

"Give it to Kingdon," she answered. "It will help him in his business."

It was finally arranged that the sum should be divided on the exact lines of the original ownership. As Mrs. Dale's estate was the larger, the larger sum went accordingly to her.

Mrs. Bruce brightened at the news. The home in which she lived was now secure, and the money removed her and her daughter from the danger of want. It was no more, she said, than right to have the sum divided thus. Mr. Dale had deserted her daughter without just cause, and the least he could do was to secure her material welfare.

The legal time had hardly expired when Mrs. Dale filed her papers, asking for a divorce. She had sent in the first place for Mr. Brooks and asked him to attend to the matter, but he replied, almost brusquely, that he could have nothing to do with it. When pressed for a reason he showed a communication, recently received from the Governor of the Commonwealth, tendering him a Superior Court judgeship, which he said he had concluded to accept. This would prevent him taking any matters of this kind. Could he recommend any one? No, but almost any reputable attorney would do.

"It will be uncontested," said Ida, looking at him wistfully.

He did not reply. A sadness spread over his brow. When he next spoke it was of other things, and his voice was husky.

Mr. Hayne read the decree in a newspaper when he

was at breakfast, and pushed his coffee and eggs away. His appetite was gone.

Kingdon did not wait an unnecessary time before securing a legal sanction to his union with Margaret. The years he had been obliged to wait seemed endless, and yet the end came. He took her to his heart and home, and began again to know what happiness meant.

Before that day Margaret had received a letter from Ida, couched in the dearest and most affectionate terms. It begged her not to let any fantastic scruples come in the way of taking the position that belonged to her and to her boy.

"Do not imagine that I am unhappy," Ida added. "A union that never was what it professed to be has been severed, and I am like a bird freed from its cage. Let me hear from you often, and some day we must meet and kiss each other again. For I love you, dear girl, with all my heart."

As she had no child to complicate the situation, Ida secured from the court the privilege of resuming her maiden name. And it did not wholly surprise some of the persons in this drama when, about a year after her divorce, an announcement appeared in the daily papers of the marriage of "Judge Sidney Brooks, of the Superior Court, to Miss Ida Bruce of Newton."

"When did you begin to love me?" Ida asked of her new husband the day after the wedding.

"I hardly know," he said. "There had been in my mind the dream of such a being before we met. When I saw you in your mother's parlor I recognized the woman of my aspirations, only to be told that you were destined for another. What a joy, after I had resigned myself to perpetual bachelorhood, to find you clasped in my arms at last!"

The next spring Ida heard news from the present Mrs. Dale.

"We have a new baby," she wrote, with the faltering hand of a convalescing mother, "and we have named her 'Ida Bruce Dale.' My only prayer is that she may be as pure, as true, as noble, as her loved and honored namesake. Kingdon sends his best wishes to you and to your husband."

And then, with the certainty of a woman, she wrote her "P. S.":

"Master Kingdon Leonard Rivers Dale, who stands at my side, has learned that I am writing to 'That pretty, pretty, pretty lady, whose picture is always on mamma's table,' and insists on sending 'tree mill'on kisses' for his own self."

Her husband picked up the letter and read it through.

"What a lot of nonsense you women write to each other!" he ejaculated, with thick voice; and the new baby, over whose little form he leaned, with averted head, blinked at the drops of water that fell on its tiny face.

THE END.



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